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AUGUST 27, 2007

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SPECIAL REPORT

TWO YEARS AFTER KATRINA
The State of Sports in New Orleans
BY ALEXANDER WOLFF




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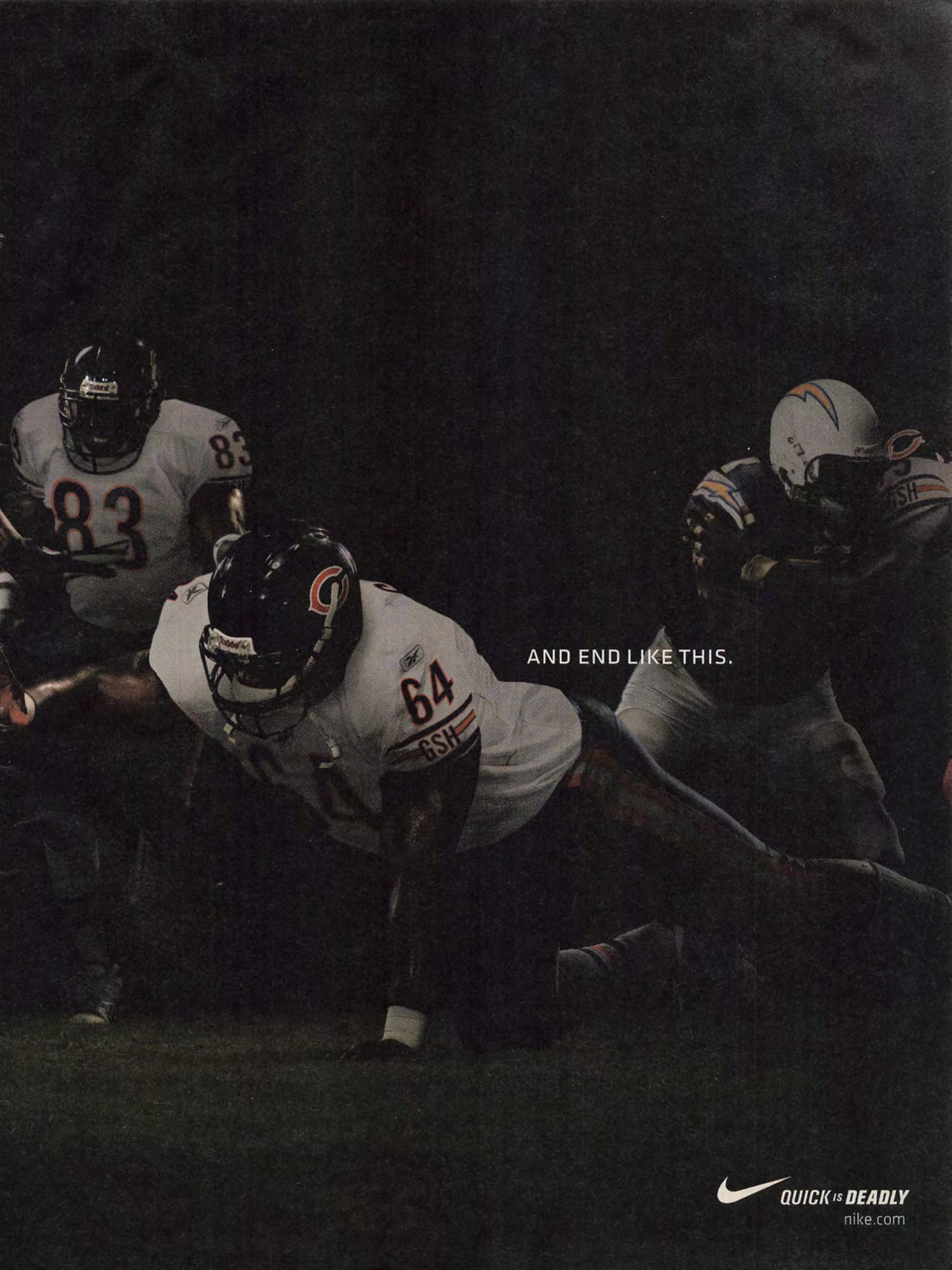


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A dramatic, low-key photograph of an NFL game. In the center, a Chicago Bears player wearing jersey number 64 is being tackled by two Denver Broncos players. The Bears player is in a three-point stance, having just released the ball. The Broncos players are wearing white helmets with orange and blue lightning bolts. The scene is set on a football field at night or in a dark stadium, with the players' uniforms and helmets providing the primary light source. The Bears player's jersey has "64" and "BSH" (Brian Shaw) visible. The Broncos players' jerseys have "BSH" visible. The text "AND END LIKE THIS." is superimposed on the right side of the image.

AND END LIKE THIS.

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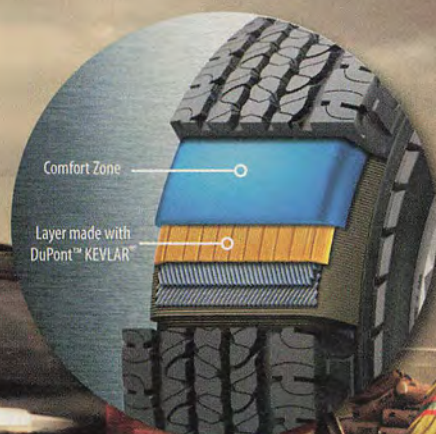
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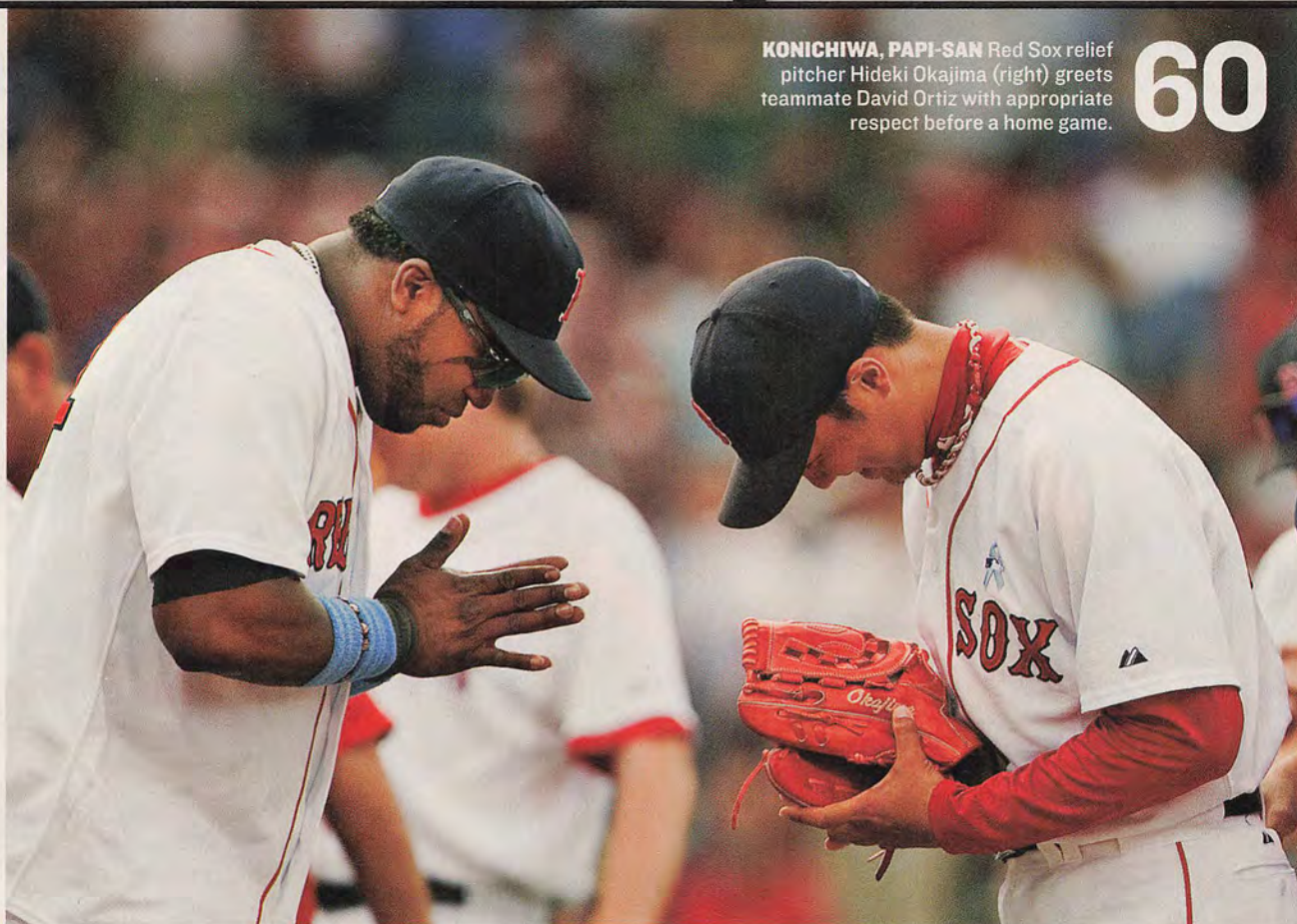
GOODYEAR
Get there

Lineup

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KONICHIWA, PAPI-SAN Red Sox relief pitcher Hideki Okajima (right) greets teammate David Ortiz with appropriate respect before a home game.

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**Two Years After
KATRINA**

Sports played a special role early in the recovery, but beyond the Superdome, in the depopulated Lower Ninth Ward, there's a great need to get at-risk youth back in play

by Alexander Wolff
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PHOTOGRAPH BY BOB ROSATO

INSET PHOTO: John Biever

SI Extra

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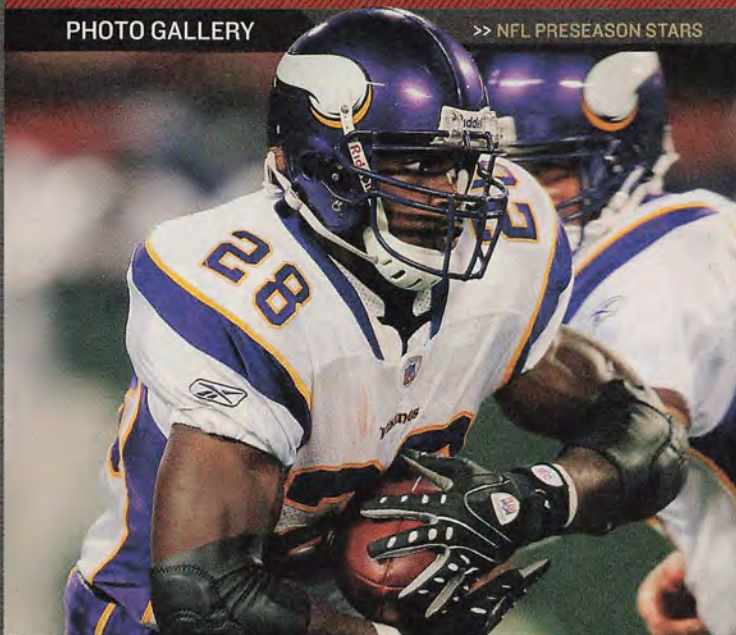
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FEATURED COLUMNS



PETER KING



> Drawing A Blank

Here's why Falcons owner Arthur Blank gets my sympathy: He did everything for Michael Vick and got kicked in the groin. "It hurts," says Blank. "I'm very distressed."

> Read more of this column at SI.com/king.



JON HEYMAN



> Awards Watch

To decipher the competition for the AL Cy Young—Josh Beckett leads—you'd need a dartboard and 10 darts. See all my AL awards picks.

> Read more of this column at SI.com/heyman.

TRAFFIC REPORT



> MOST VIEWED

1. Wrestler Brian Adams found dead
2. Top 20 CFB games to watch
3. Peter King's MMQB



> OUR PICKS

1. CFB postcards from camp
2. Grant Wahl: David Beckham takes N.Y.C.
3. Ian Thomsen catches up with former Celtics great Bill Russell

THE GREAT DEBATE



FanNation

NFL vs. College Football

> SI.com's Stewart Mandel and Andrew Perloff go head-to-head on which is better, NCAA or professional football. Follow their live blogs.

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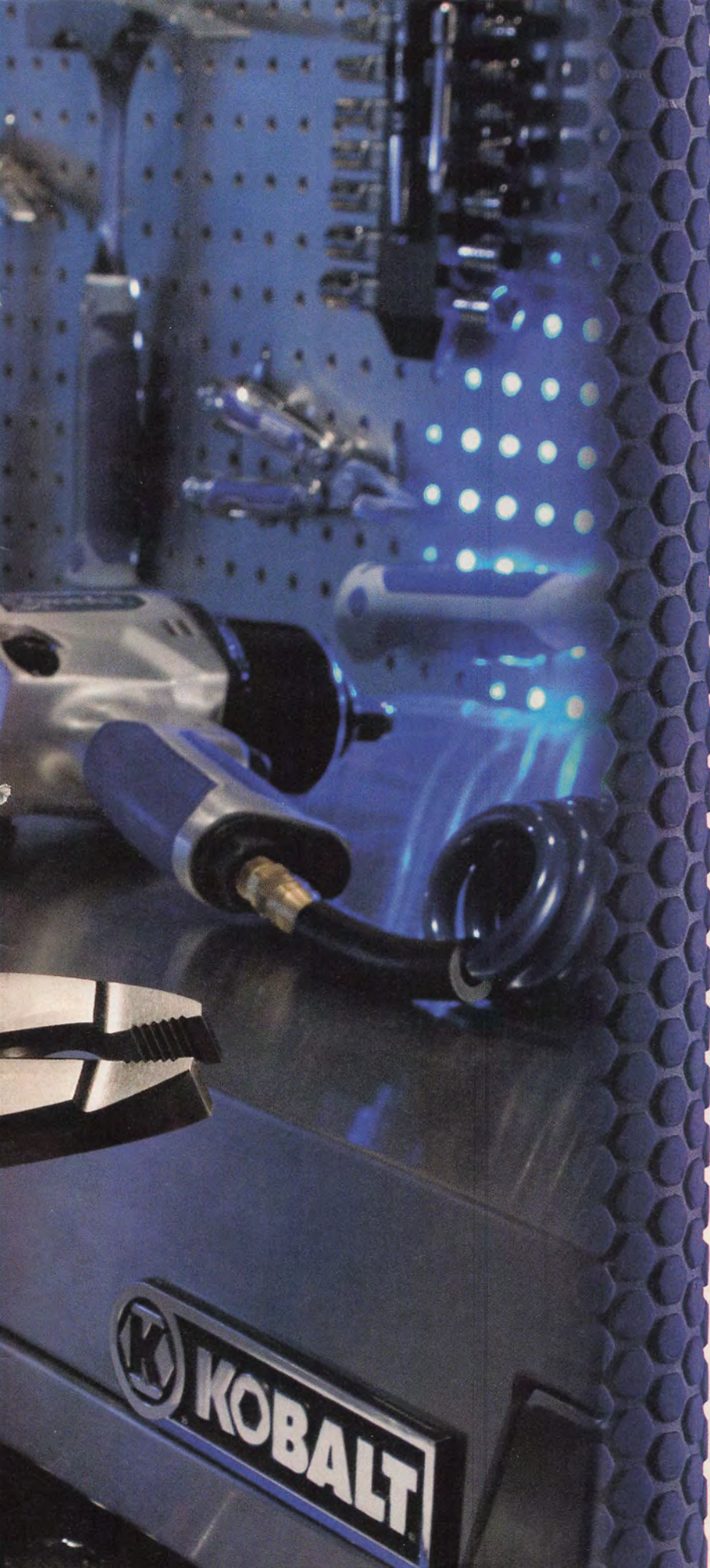
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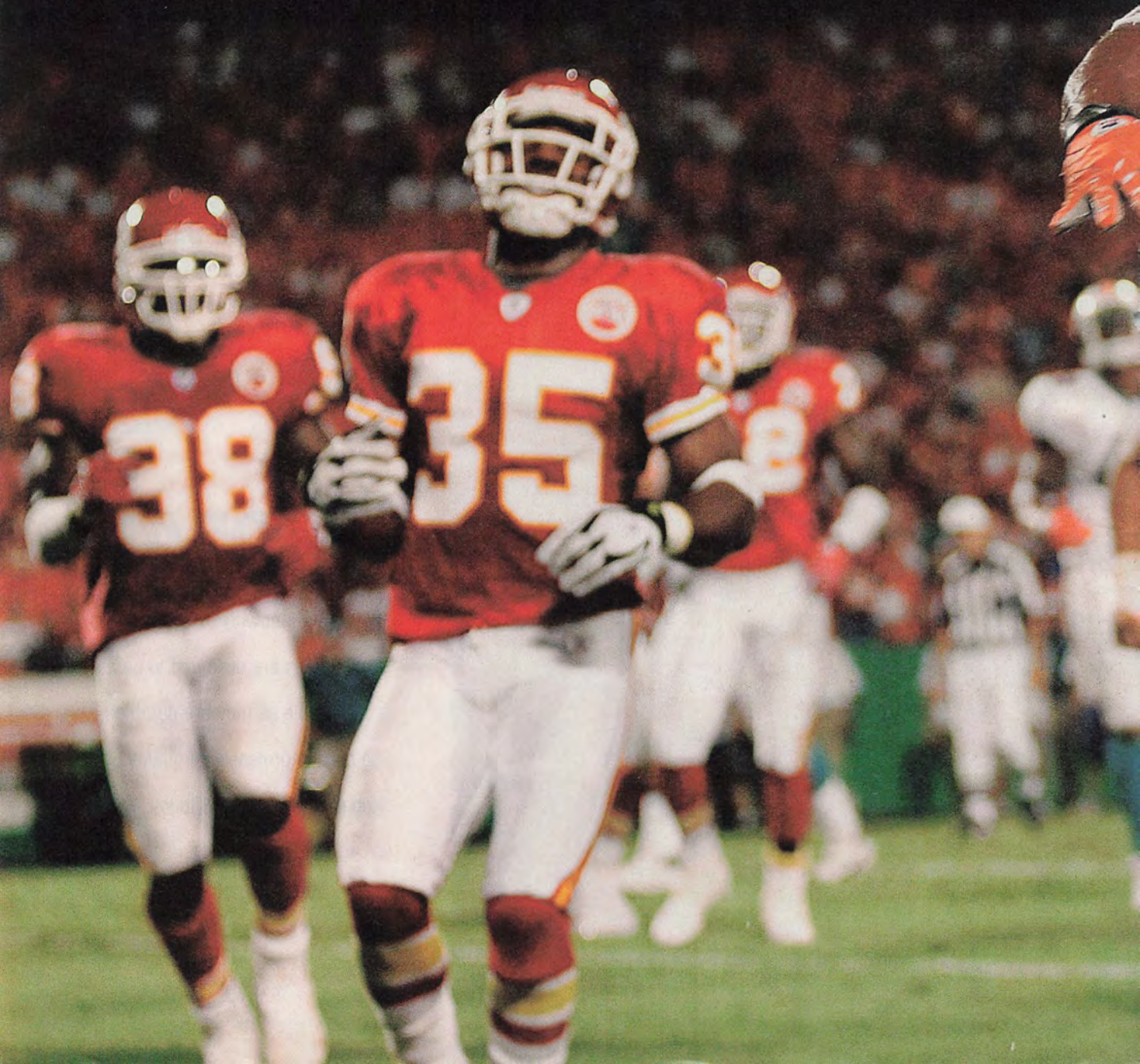
LeadingOff

Flying Fish

Dolphins running back Patrick Cobbs glided into the end zone well ahead of the Chiefs' defense during last Thursday night's preseason game at Arrowhead Stadium. Cobbs's seven-yard dash with 4:30 to play cut Kansas City's lead to 10-9, and rookie quarterback John Beck's ensuing two-point conversion run provided the tying and winning points. Cobbs finished with 27 yards on four carries.

Photograph by Jamie Squire/Getty Images

• For more Leading Off pictures, download mySI at SI.com/mySI.



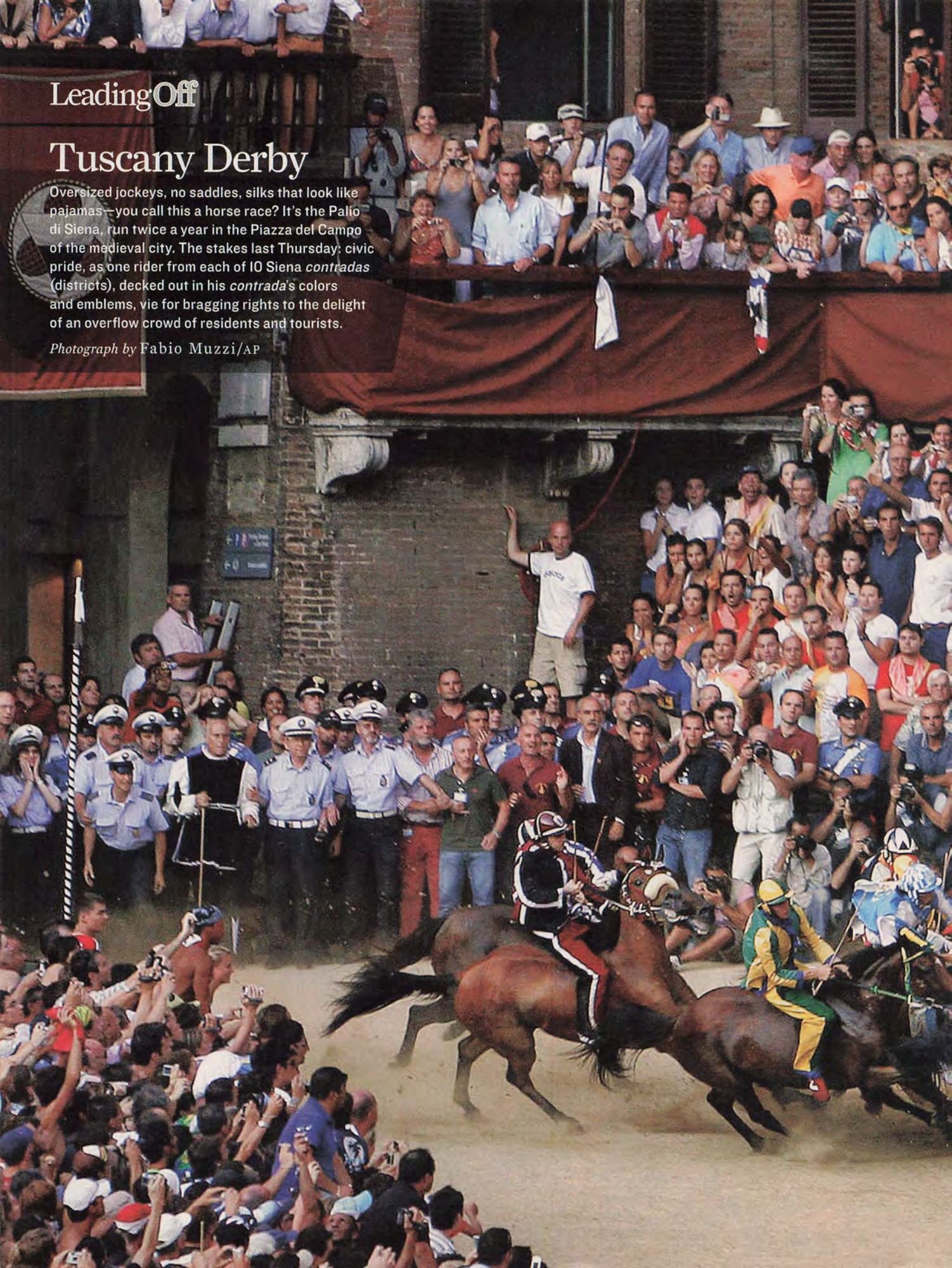


LeadingOff

Tuscany Derby

Oversized jockeys, no saddles, silks that look like pajamas—you call this a horse race? It's the Palio di Siena, run twice a year in the Piazza del Campo of the medieval city. The stakes last Thursday: civic pride, as one rider from each of 10 Siena *contradas* (districts), decked out in his *contrada's* colors and emblems, vie for bragging rights to the delight of an overflow crowd of residents and tourists.

Photograph by Fabio Muzzi/AP







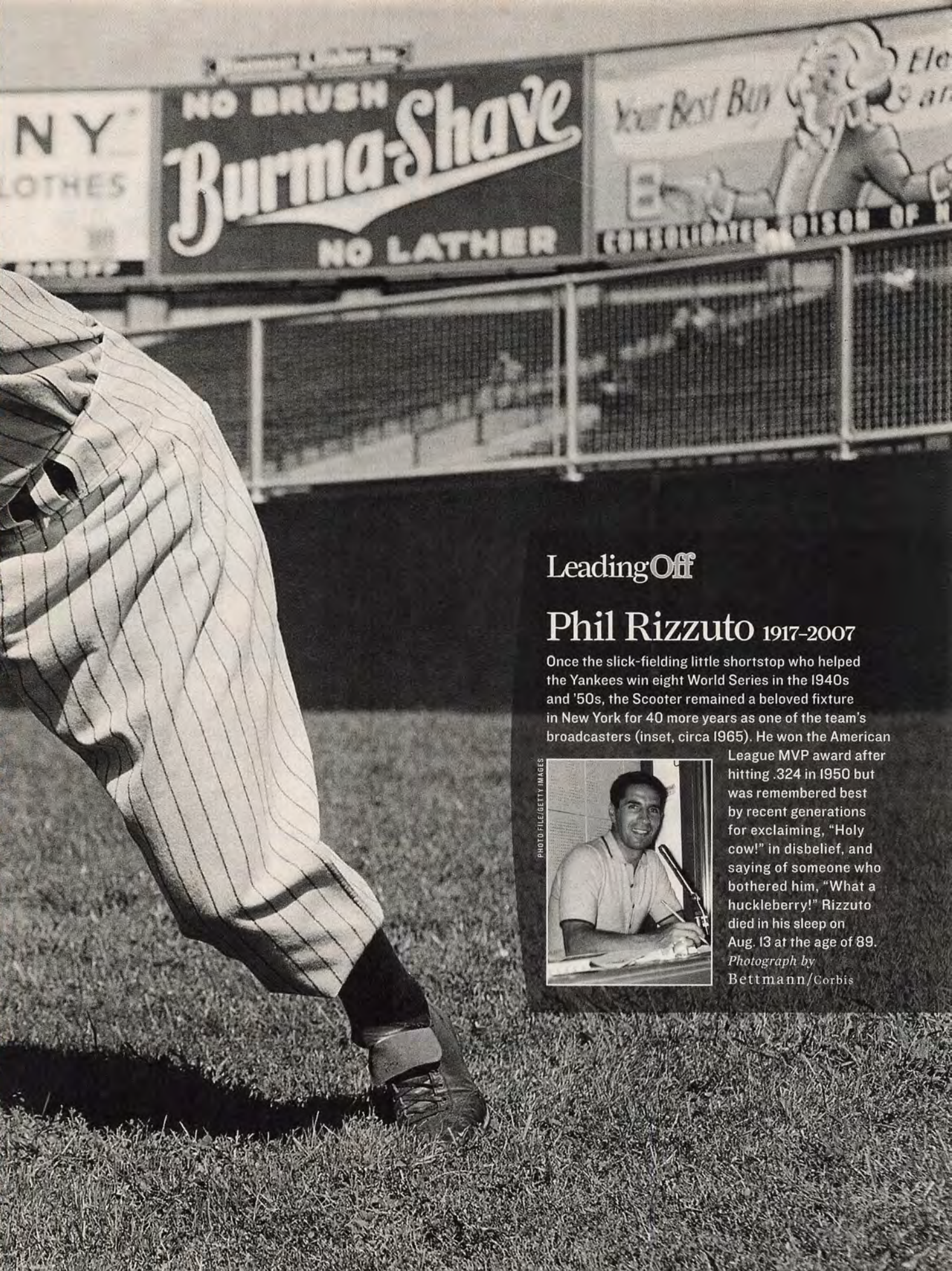
YOU'LL SEE

Max

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OUT



LeadingOff

Phil Rizzuto 1917-2007

Once the slick-fielding little shortstop who helped the Yankees win eight World Series in the 1940s and '50s, the Scooter remained a beloved fixture in New York for 40 more years as one of the team's broadcasters (inset, circa 1965). He won the American

League MVP award after hitting .324 in 1950 but was remembered best by recent generations for exclaiming, "Holy cow!" in disbelief, and saying of someone who bothered him, "What a huckleberry!" Rizzuto died in his sleep on Aug. 13 at the age of 89.

Photograph by
Bettmann/Corbis



PHOTO FILE/GETTY IMAGES

Hyundai Presents Smart Discoveries

An Oasis in the Desert

University of Phoenix Stadium BY MICHAEL WEINREB

The call came in 1997, and Peter Eisenman didn't hesitate. An Arizona Cardinals official contacted the architect, best known for his highbrow and often iconoclastic designs, to see if he'd like to submit a concept for the team's new football stadium. Eisenman would join Frank Gehry as one of three prospective designers.

But according to Eisenman, Gehry is a hockey fan. Eisenman, meanwhile, has held New York Giants season tickets—one row from the top—for 50 years. During that first call with the Cardinals,

From the outside, the stadium resembles a coiled rattlesnake surrounding a barrel cactus.

he began naming members of the 1947 Chicago Cardinals backfield. "Where they came from, I don't know," he says.

The team called off the competition a week later. Nine years later the University of Phoenix Stadium opened to acclaim for its cutting-edge innovation—most notably, an inclined retractable roof and a grass field that slides in and out on a wheeled tray. The mechanism, turf included, weighs 18.9 million pounds. Riding on rails, the grass can receive natural sunlight on non-game days, while allowing

the facility to serve other functions. From the outside, the stadium is meant to resemble a coiled rattlesnake surrounding a barrel cactus.

While there were obvious practical concerns, Eisenman says he approached the design as a football fan first, and an architect second. His goal, he says, was to let fans experience the atmosphere of the stadium from the time they left their cars until the time they reached their seats. Riding up the escalators, patrons can see through to the field, while the open concourses with concession

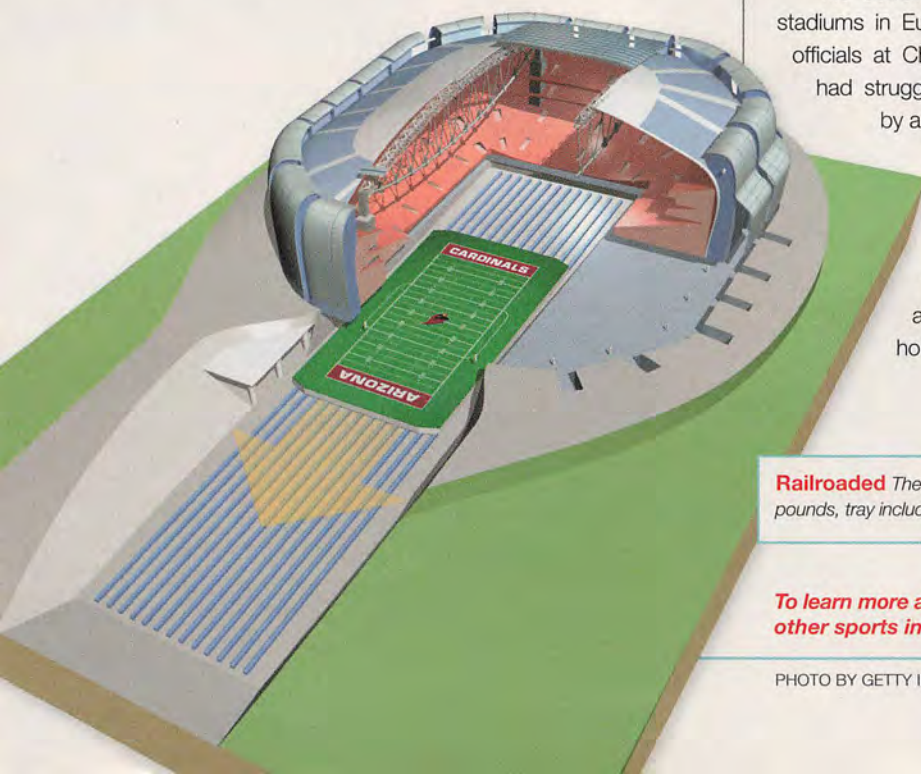


The stadium's modern design offers sightlines even for fans riding the escalators.

stands on the exterior let fans wait in line for a hot dog and still watch the game. The trusses supporting the roof are "almost ephemeral," Eisenman says, even though they're mammoth in size.

He borrowed the idea for the sliding field from a pair of stadiums in Europe and Japan, in part because he knew that officials at Chase Field, home of the Arizona Diamondbacks, had struggled to maintain their own grass. The field, designed by a company called Uni-Systems, is the first of its kind in the United States.

Eisenman's firm has since submitted designs for several stadium projects in Europe. But American football remains his first love. "To me," he says, "doing a football stadium is like a Catholic doing a cathedral." Certainly the Cardinals faithful who pay homage on Sundays appreciate such reverence.



Railroaded The University of Phoenix Stadium's field weighs 18.9 million pounds, tray included, and slides outside the complex to receive natural light.

To learn more about the University of Phoenix Stadium and other sports innovations, visit si.com/smartdiscoveries.

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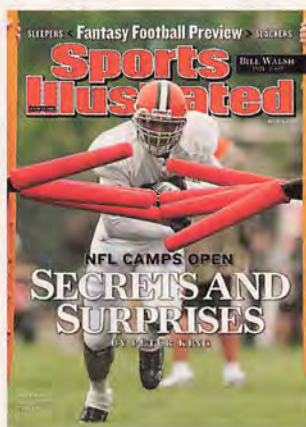
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Brown Out?

How could you put Cleveland running back Jamal Lewis on the cover of your NFL training-camps issue (*Game On!*, Aug. 6)? Putting a Brown there is like showing a Devil Rays player on your baseball spring training issue or an Atlanta Hawk on your NBA preseason issue. First, those teams need to earn respect and win.

Mark Weese, Monterey, Calif.



The Once-Grand Tour

While the veteran Tour de France riders again gave us reason to doubt the legitimacy of their sport (thank you, Alexandre Vinokourov, Iban Mayo, Michael Rasmussen, Ivan Basso and Christian Moreni), the emergence of athletes like Alberto Contador, Linus Gerdemann and Juan Mauricio Soler shows the Tour will survive. I was glad to see that Austin Murphy didn't just bash the Tour (*False Positive*, Aug. 6); he also detailed the final time trial, which led to the closest-grouped top three ever. That one hour, two minutes and 44 seconds of racing helped me forget all the controversy and get lost in the pure excitement that I expect from the Tour.

Ken Rodgers, Massapequa, N.Y.

I am amazed at the death sentence cycling is dealt for actually doing something about doping. Besides forfeiting a year's salary, the riders kicked out of this year's Tour de France will not be allowed to participate in any race for two years. Meanwhile, a steroid user in the NFL is suspended for four games and can almost be named Defensive Player of the Year—a certain Chargers linebacker comes to mind. Baseball has a new home run king, and is anyone still wondering what "help" Barry Bonds got along the way to breaking the record? Maybe it's not cycling that gets it wrong on performance-enhancing drugs. The Tour is alive and, if not well, at least getting better.

Neil Ward, Syracuse, Utah

The problems in cycling may well be a direct result of its evolution into a team sport. The bad behavior grows from the peer pressure that exists within the team construct. Over time, an every-man-for-himself format could return the sport to its purer roots.

Jim Bracey, East Greenwich, R.I.

Lester's Return

Joe Lemire quotes Jon Lester, who recently returned to the Red Sox after being treated for anaplastic large-cell lymphoma (*PLAYERS*, Aug. 6), as saying, "I just want to get attention for the way I play baseball. I want to get back to being normal." Jon, fat chance of that ever happening. There is nothing "normal" about the way you play baseball. Godspeed, son. And a hearty welcome back.

John Hamblin, Medway, Mass.

Earnest's Efforts

In your listing of NFL and AFL backs who ran for 200 yards or more with a third team after gaining 1,000-plus yards with two others (*PLAYERS*, Aug. 6), you omitted Earnest Jackson. During the mid-'80s he almost became the first back to gain 1,000-plus yards with three teams—and he did it in consecutive seasons, too. After gaining 1,179 yards with the Chargers in 1984 and 1,028 for the Eagles in '85, he rushed for 910 yards with the Steelers in '86. Not bad for an eighth-round draft pick.

Steve Calandro, Eaton Rapids, Mich.

Soccer in Iraq

What a relief it was to read Grant Wahl's uplifting story on the Iraqi national team and its success at this past Asian Cup (*PLAYERS*, Aug. 6), particularly after reading so many negative stories about our own sports icons. Soccer has done something in Iraq that even the president of that country could not do.

Ali Rasoulinejad, New York City

Fan Friendly

Thank you for covering the Arena Bowl (*INSIDE ARENA FOOTBALL*, Aug. 6). Back in May, I attended an AFL game between Georgia and Tampa Bay, and afterward fans were invited to come onto the field and meet the players. I'll be back there before I go to another NFL game.

Christopher Milford, Hartwell, Ga.

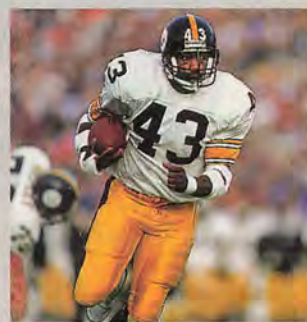
Kicking Back

I was appalled to read the negative letters about David Beckham's efforts to bring his sport to America (*LETTERS*, Aug. 6). The people who wrote in need to take a few minutes—I suggest 90—to appreciate the finesse and athleticism that go into the beautiful game we call soccer.

Patrick Phillips, Houston

To those who say that soccer is boring, I guess the next time I tune into a baseball game, I will have to pay attention to how many seeds Lou Piniella spits between innings so I can experience the excitement that baseball fans feel.

Jonathan Porras, Logan, Utah



TRIPLE THREAT Jackson just missed 1,000 yards in 1986.

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Players

L I F E O N A N D O F F T H E F I E L D

Too Much, Too Soon

Preseason polls bend college football out of shape **By Stewart Mandel**

THOUGH THE FIRST college football games won't be played until Aug. 30, the 2007 season effectively began last Saturday—the day the Associated Press released its preseason poll. If you haven't heard, No. 1 USC will be playing No. 2 LSU for the national title on Jan. 7, but No. 3 West Virginia is also a strong contender; No. 10 Louisville has serious catching up to do; and No. 20 Nebraska might as well throw in the towel now.

For more than 70 years the opinions of these writers and broadcasters have held as much influence over college football as Simon Cowell now does over wannabe pop stars. Because there is still no playoff in Division I, the poll serves as the sport's ultimate arbiter. (One of them, anyway. The *USA Today* coaches poll released its preseason edition on Aug. 3, and the first BCS rankings will be out on Oct. 14.) The AP poll, which is no longer part of the BCS formula, can still bestow national champion status. Thus college football is the only sport in which teams are seeded before they play.

It's time to start fixing this very flawed system. As one of 65 AP voters, I know that evaluating teams that don't face the same opponents, whose rosters turn over significantly each off-season and whose performance will be affected by injuries, suspensions and other variables, is an exercise in educated guesswork. Using last season's final rankings as a starting point, I dutifully assessed which teams returned key players and which were gutted by graduation and NFL defections. That does not mean I was immune to the traps that voters often fall into.

For starters, pollees often give too much credence to traditional powers and undersell upstart programs. Louisville and No. 16 Rutgers will both start this season ranked lower than they finished 2006 (Louisville was sixth, Rutgers was 12th) even though they return many top players. Meanwhile Florida State, which finished 7-6 and lost 30-0 to ACC champ Wake Forest, is No. 19, while the Demon Deacons are buried in the "others receiving votes" category.

Voters are also easily seduced by teams with offensive star power, while lousy defenses are often overlooked (see last year's preseason No. 2, Notre Dame). I fear my fellow voters and I are making this mistake with West Virginia. Yes, the Mountaineers have the ultraexciting tandem of quarterback Pat White and running back Steve Slaton, but their defense is still unproven.

For most of the 20th century this harebrained exercise was basically harmless because the national championship was mythical. Since the advent of the BCS, however, preseason polls can no longer be viewed as merely water-cooler fodder. They shape the course of the season and can affect a team's chances of reaching the title game or another BCS bowl. Auburn found this out in 2004, which it began at No. 17 in the AP poll. Despite finishing 12-0, the Tigers couldn't eclipse USC or Oklahoma, both of which also went undefeated but had started Nos. 1 and 2.

With so much now riding on these rankings—not only bragging rights but the \$17 million paycheck for reaching a BCS bowl—an increasing number of coaches and fans have been calling for a change. "If you're going to have this system, then [polls] should start around the first of October," said Auburn coach Tommy Tuberville. "People will have a little bit of an idea on how [teams] are doing rather than guessing."

The reality is that there will always be preseason rankings of various sorts. Magazines and websites (like SI and SI.com) know that late-summer previews are extremely popular with college-football-starved fans. But it's time for the sport's two national championship selectors, AP and *USA Today*, to pull the plug on their preseason polls. They should let the national-title race begin when the first team puts toe to leather—not when the first sportswriter e-mails his ballot to New York.

Stewart Mandel's Bowls, Polls, and Tattered Souls, published by John Wiley & Sons, goes on sale this Friday.



Colt Brennan...

Paradise Found



THE BRENNAN FILE: Two-and-a-half years ago, at 21, Colt Brennan spent seven days in jail, convicted of burglary and criminal trespass in a University of Colorado dorm. "I did what I did," he says, acknowledging his mistake. What he did ended his career as a Buffaloes quarterback and set him to salvaging his future. A year at community college, an

invite to walk on at Hawaii in 2005 and then last year's explosion. When the '06 season ended, Brennan, raised in Irvine, Calif., had an NCAA-record 58 TD passes, a 186.0 passer rating and a national profile. When this season ends, the Rainbow Warriors' leading man might have a Heisman Trophy.

On living in Hawaii

This is my sanctuary, my place to escape and find myself, and become a great quarterback in the meantime. I haven't had a bad experience since I got here. No one has ever judged me except on my character—and that after they met me. The love is still coming.

On visiting a juvenile detention center near his Honolulu apartment

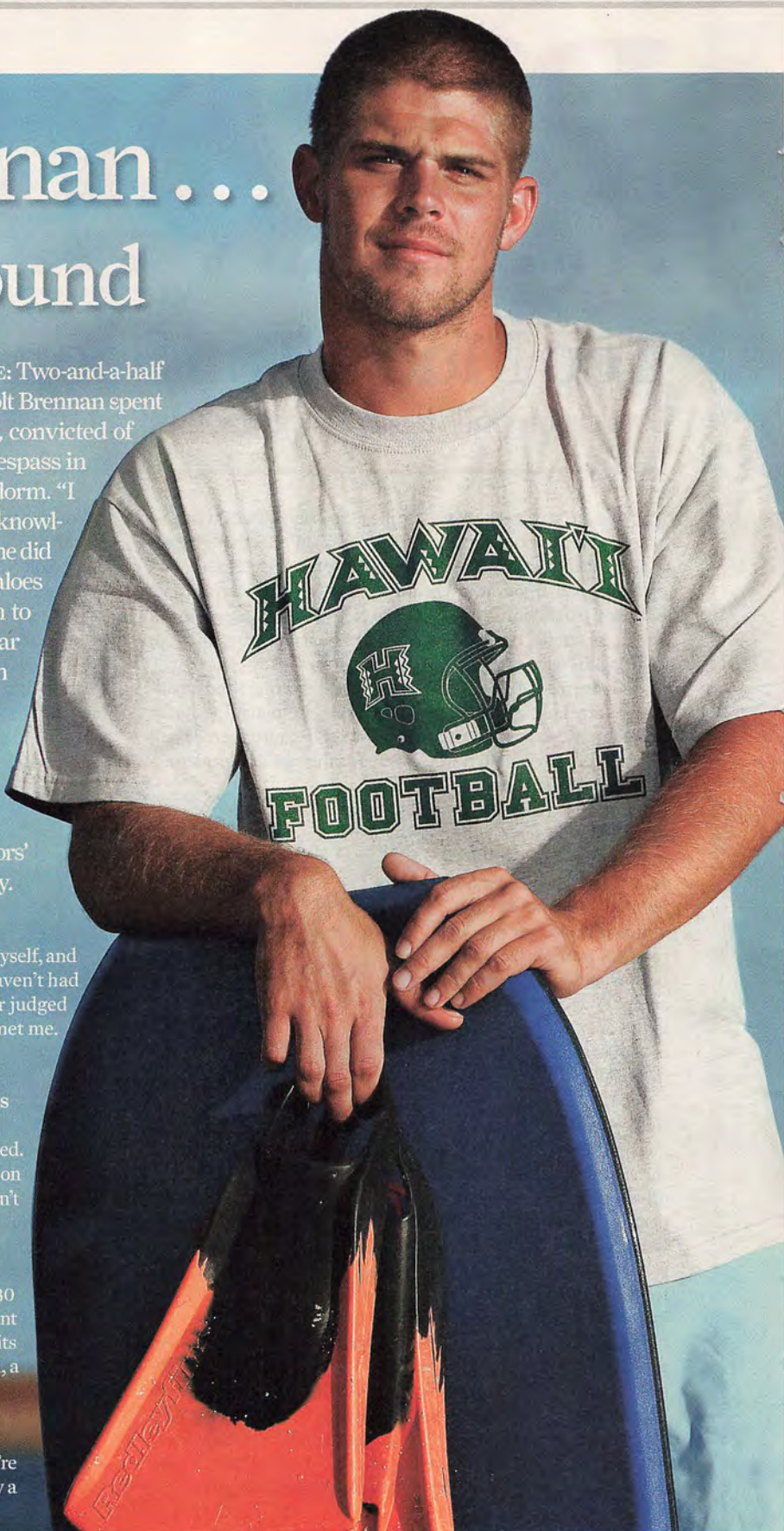
I go to donate clothes, but I've also stood up and talked. I tell them I was convicted of a felony, but now I'm on top of the world. Just because you're in this place doesn't mean you'll be in and out of crime your whole life.

On a typical nonpractice day

We throw our stuff in my Jeep Cherokee and go 30 minutes to the North Shore. It's like going to a different island. Sandy Beach is the summer hot spot, with its big flows. Everyone brings something: a surfboard, a boogie board, whatever—everyone's in the water.

On surfer-football player tension

In Hawaii it seems that if you're a football player, you're not really a surfer. If you're a surfer, you're not really a



football player. At a beach you could find trouble. You have to know how not to piss people off.

On having dreadlocks this summer
Half my team is Polynesian with hair to their shoulders. The other half—including our starting receivers—have dreadlocks. So they helped me get it braided. I don't have a girlfriend, and the dreadlocks weren't helping me get one. Girls hate it.

On why he cut his hair
My helmet was rubbing my head in front, and it started taking out my braids in that one area. I looked like a goof. I decided I didn't want the most disgusting haircut in college football all over SPORTS ILLUSTRATED.

On speaking Samoan on the field
When I got to Hawaii, I was getting into it, and we have a lot of players who speak Samoan. I started showing off what I'd learned. Next thing you knew, we were implementing Samoan in audibles. I'm afraid to give much away, but we use one word that sounds like *pizza*. Everyone [on the other team] thinks I'm yelling, "Pizza, pizza... pepperoni and cheese..." They don't know what to do.

On coach June Jones's offense
He spreads responsibility across the offense, which makes it fun. I have more confidence when I don't have to call every play, change every protection and change receivers' routes. From that standpoint, Coach is a genius and I love him.

On being called a system quarterback
Damn right I am. And I love this system. But you see me make plays even when it breaks down. That separates me from guys in this system in the past.

On entering the 2007 draft, then changing his mind two days later
Everything happened too fast. Before my five TDs in the Hawaii Bowl no one talked about me as a big-time pick. Then I sent my projection to the NFL, and it came in really high—a mid-first-round pick. What the hell? Then I realized the NFL combine was soon, and I'd have to gain weight. I just wasn't ready to leave. My heart was still in Hawaii. —As told to Adam Duerson



Sippio

Movin' up: Receiver Bobby Sippio led the Arena League in scoring this year—he had also led his Chicago Rush to the 2006 title—and now he's ready to reap: He signed a two-year NFL deal with Kansas City. Explained Sippio, 26, "Good things come to those who work hard."



Duncans

Dave Duncan (the Cardinals' pitching coach; his staff had a 1.90 ERA over 10 games through Sunday) and son **Chris** (a St. Louis outfielder; 20 homers) had helped the Cards get within four games of the NL Central lead. Big brother **Shelley** (above) added to his Yankees legend: a three-run, ninth-inning homer last week was his sixth dinged in 41 at bats.

Arizona Athletics

While the D-backs keep soaring, the University of Arizona got a serious boost: Ex-Wildcat and current Net Richard Jefferson donated \$3.5 million to build a sports facility on campus. Arizona athletic director Jim Livengood, measuring his joy: "... it goes way beyond words."

Roger Federer

Important numbers: 26, his age, and 50, his tournament wins. Said Federer after reaching the milestone, "It's really a lot."



Capuano

Slidin' back: Pitcher Chris Capuano got off to a 5-0 start this year—helping Milwaukee vault into first place. Since then? He's 0-10, and the Brewers have lost all of his 16 starts, including Sunday's, when he celebrated his 29th birthday by blowing a 5-0 lead and, perhaps, his spot in the rotation.

McDougle

For defensive end **Jerome McDougle** (right), the Eagles' top pick in 2003, the untimely hits keep coming. He's played only 33 career games due to injury (one a gunshot wound), and now he'll miss Philly's season with a strained right triceps. Big brother **Stockar** feels Jerome's pain: The Jaguars' tackle is out for the year with a torn Achilles tendon.



Puerto Rico's Baseball

No más. The nation's 69-year-old winter baseball league—Roberto Clemente (left), Willie Mays and Ivan Rodriguez played there—has shut down for financial reasons. Said alumnus and ex-big leaguer Mike Perez, "Today is a day of mourning for Puerto Rican sport."

Mike Myers

From the penthouse to the... Veteran reliever cut by the Yanks got picked up by the last-place White Sox, losers of eight straight.

SI PLAYERS MLB POLL

Which pitching statistic is most meaningful?

Earned Run Average.... 33%

Walks and Hits per Inning Pitched.... 18%

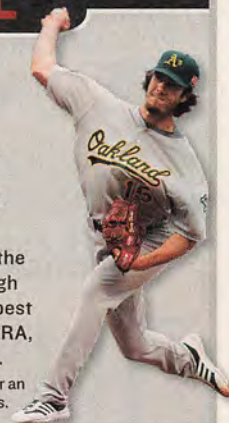
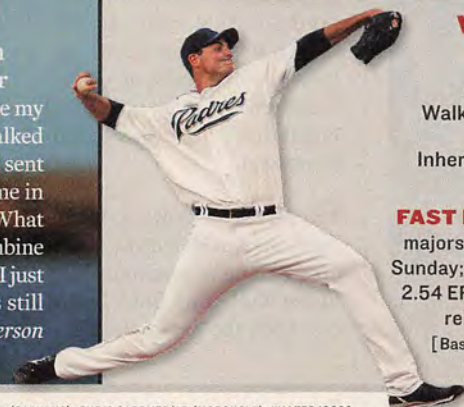
Wins.... 13%

Inherited Runners Allowed to Score.... 6%

Innings Pitched.... 6%

FAST FACTS Padre Chris Young (left) led the majors in ERA (1.93) and WHIP (0.99) through Sunday; the A's Dan Haren (right) had an AL-best 2.54 ERA.... While 46% of starters chose ERA, relievers' top choice was WHIP (23.5%).

[Based on a survey of 212 major league pitchers] • For an expanded version of the poll go to SI.com/players.



For the Record

Decline and Fall

THE DETAILS were still to be determined—the length of his prison sentence and his suspension from the NFL—but what was clear on Monday after Michael Vick agreed to plead guilty to a felony dogfighting charge was that his fall from football eminence is complete. The 27-year-old quarterback, once one of the most popular players in the NFL, will stand before a federal judge next Monday in Richmond and admit to his role in a dogfighting operation that he financed for six years. Prosecutors are believed to have agreed to recommend a sentence of 12 to 18 months in prison, though Judge Henry Hudson, who is not known for leniency, could give Vick up to five years. (A sentencing date will be set on Monday.)

How did Vick reach this nadir in the prime of his career—and only two years after signing a \$130 million contract? One former teammate gave SI a simple answer: “He’s not that smart.” Another said that Vick was coddled by the Falcons and his advisers. “He never thought there were consequences for how he acted,” the teammate said.

In addition to a prison term that will likely run through the 2008 season, Vick also faces a potential suspension from the league. “We totally condemn the conduct outlined in the charges, which is inconsistent with what Michael Vick previously told both our office and the Falcons,” the NFL said in a statement issued on Monday. Vick’s lawyer Billy Martin said that “football is not the most important thing” for Vick, who, he said, “wants to get his life back on track.” If Vick is allowed to return, the Falcons or any other team may not want him because of the backlash they would face. “If a team were to try to sign him, we would certainly make them aware of what he has done,” says John Goodwin, of the Humane Society of the United States. “But I don’t know that we would have to do much. The hanging of dogs, the drowning of dogs, electrocuting dogs—those are images that are not going to be easy for people to forget.” —George Dohrmann

DOGGED PURSUIT Protesters vow to remain vigilant.



Sentenced To two years’ probation for his role in a sports gambling operation, ex-Coyotes assistant coach Rick Tocchet. The former NHL star was at the center of a case last year that unfolded during the Olympics with allegations of mob ties and game fixing—none of which ever materialized. Tocchet, who says he never bet on hockey, has been on an indefinite leave from the Coyotes since he was charged last February, but says he hopes to return to the game.

Died Of cancer at age 81, Sam Pollock, who put together the Montreal Canadiens teams that won nine Stanley Cups in his 14 years as G.M. Pollock was one of hockey’s great schemers. In 1970 he acquired the Oakland Seals’ first-round choice in the



’71 draft and later traded forward Ralph Backstrom to Los Angeles to help ensure that the Kings would finish ahead of the Seals, permitting Montreal to grab Guy Lafleur with the No. 1 pick. “Sam was the G.M. guru,” says Lou Nanne, the Minnesota North Stars G.M. from ’78 to ’88. “When he wanted something from you in a trade, he would seem generous and outgoing. But you had the sense you should be worried.”

Revealed By Marco Materazzi, the slur that drove Zinedine Zidane to head-butt him in the World Cup final. In his new book the Italian defender

says that Zidane, who had been complaining that Materazzi was holding his jersey, said, “If you want my shirt, you can have it after the match.” Materazzi then replied, “I prefer the whore that is your sister.” Zidane was given a red card, and Italy won the



game against France on penalty kicks. Earlier this month French coach Raymond Domenech applauded Materazzi for getting Zidane sent off: “I say ‘bravo’ to him,” Domenech said.

Pleaded Guilty to two felonies for betting on games he officiated and giving inside information to gamblers, former NBA referee Tim Donaghy. The 40-year-old faces up to 25 years in prison when he is sentenced in November. Last Friday ESPN radio reported that Donaghy would name 20 other officials who have gambled. None of their alleged wagering is believed to be illegal or on basketball, but NBA rules bar officials from taking part in any gambling activity except for off-season trips to the racetrack.

Announced By Tennessee women’s basketball coach Pat Summitt, that she and her husband of 27 years are divorcing. Summitt, who is the alltime winningest coach in college basketball history, cited irreconcilable differences. Her husband, R.B. Summitt, is a banker. The filing comes two years after UT renamed its basketball court The Summitt. The school did not say if it would change the name again if Summitt decides to use her maiden name.

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Go Figure

4 Number of 1-0 games in the four-year history of Cincinnati's Great American Ballpark.

0 Number of 1-0 games at the Great American Ballpark not started by the Reds' Aaron Harang.

11 Total bases (two homers, a double and a single) for Arizona's Micah Owings in Saturday's 12-6 win over the Braves, the most for a pitcher since Jim Tobin of the Boston Braves had 12 in 1942.

446 Distance in feet of Owings's second homer, the third longest at Turner Field this year.

\$200,000 Amount Bernard Hopkins was fined by the Nevada State Athletic Commission for starting a brawl during the weigh-in for his July fight with Winky Wright.

66,237. Attendance at Giants Stadium for last Saturday's Red Bulls-Galaxy game, in which David Beckham made his first MLS start.

11,573 The Red Bulls' average attendance for their 10 home games before Saturday.



PICTURE THIS **AUG. 17** Greased-pole races held on Indonesia's Independence Day.

Announced That he will retire at season's end, Nextel Cup driver Ricky Rudd. It's not the first time that Rudd, 50, has called it a career. He left the sport after the 2005 season but was coaxed back by owner Robert Yates this season. Rudd has struggled—he has just one top 10. “Continuing to race in Cup was more of a time commitment than I was willing to put in,” said Rudd, who has finished in the top 10 in the points race 19 times in his 32-season career.

Quarantined After being diagnosed with the measles, a member of the Japanese Little League World Series team. The player, who wasn't identified, began showing signs of the disease shortly after his team arrived at the dorm where players bunk. Last Saturday Little

League officials asked players who have never had the disease or had a measles shot to take a blood test or receive a shot. No other players came down with the disease, and the player was released from an infirmary at the LLWS complex on Sunday.

Convicted Of second-degree murder for killing former USC basketball player Ryan Francis (left), 20-year-old D'Anthony Ford. In May 2006 Francis, who had just completed a freshman season in which he was the Trojans' starting point guard, was home in Louisiana visiting his family for Mother's Day when he was shot while at an intersection (SCORECARD, May 22, 2006). Prosecutors said the intended victim was a friend of Francis' who'd earlier had a dispute with Ford. “I'm glad it's over with. Now Ryan can rest, and I can rest,” said Francis' mother, Paulette. Ford faces a mandatory sentence of life without parole.

They Said It

KEN GRIFFEY JR.
Reds outfielder, after he was removed from the field in the middle of an inning in a double-switch:

“Next time they try, I'll be like Tanner in the Astrodome in *Bad News Bears*, running around the outfield making them try to catch me.”



SIGN OF THE APOCALYPSE

The manager of English soccer team Sunderland says stars won't sign with the club because the town's shopping is subpar.



PERFORMED BETTER. After *Car and Driver*, readers put Camry, Accord and the all-wheel-drive Ford Fusion to the test in Washington, D.C., *Road & Track* invited enthusiasts to do the same in Los Angeles. Once again, for styling, handling and performance, drivers said the Fusion rocked harder than the imports. Visit a Ford Dealer or go to fordchallenge.com. Bold Moves.



FUSION

See You in Court!

Handicapping the recent spate of sports-related lawsuits



KIA VAUGHN V. DON IMUS

THE CASE: Rutgers center Vaughn is suing the shrunken radiohead for defamation and slander after he called her and her teammates "nappy-headed hos" during a broadcast.

THE EXPERTS SAY: "It's about the word *ho* and whether that was understood by listeners as meaning she was a prostitute, or promiscuous, in a genuine sense, or if it was simply a slur," says Rodney Smolla, dean of Washington and Lee School of Law. "It may be offensive to a lot of folks, but my instinct is that a court will say you cannot sue on the basis of that phrase, because it's an insult but not libel."

THE PEOPLE SAY: SI asked 12 people on the street their thoughts, and they split down the middle.

BARRY BONDS V. CURT SCHILLING

THE POSSIBLE CASE: Bonds has retained two lawyers who have threatened to sue anyone who has made false and defamatory statements—presumably such as when Schilling implied on HBO's *Costas Now* that Bonds took steroids.

THE EXPERTS SAY: "All of the testimony to the grand jury and all the BALCO documents would be fair game," says Howard Wasserman, an associate professor of law at Florida International. "If you sue for defamation, you really are putting those statements that you're alleging as false and defamatory out there for repeated public review." Says Smolla, "If he does sue, he's playing with fire. A great example of this is Oscar Wilde, who was accused of [sodomy] and sued for libel. It then came out during the investigation that he was gay, and he was ruined."

THE PEOPLE SAY: Seven sided with Schilling. "Why would Bonds sue if it meant the sealed documents were fair game?" asked one.



JONATHAN LEE RICHES V. BARRY BONDS, BUD SELIG AND HANK AARON'S BAT

THE CASE: The South Carolina inmate filed a suit claiming that the two men and the piece of lumber engaged in a conspiracy to drive

up baseball's TV ratings. The suit, which seeks "42,000,000.00 million dollars in Swiss francs," also alleges that Bonds used the bat to crack the Liberty Bell.

THE EXPERTS SAY: "No chance," says Wasserman. "Prisoners have a lot of time on their hands. A lot of them become jailhouse lawyers and just start filing things." (A judge last week threw out Riches's \$63,000,000,000.00 billion claim against Michael Vick, which alleged the QB stole Riches's dogs, sold them and used the proceeds to buy arms from the Iranian government.)

THE PEOPLE SAY: Most were dismissive—"Great, our tax dollars at work"—but two actually sided with Riches. "It's common knowledge that Bonds has a time machine and would be able to do this," said one.

What's the deal with...



The Long Island Ducks?

AFTER JOSE OFFERMAN attacked an opposing pitcher who hit him in an Atlantic League game last week, the reaction of most fans was shock: *Jose Offerman is still playing baseball!?* Yes, the 38-year-old plies his trade for the Long Island Ducks, who have become a refuge for ex-big leaguers. The Ducks, an independent team, have 13 of them, including Edgardo Alfonzo and Carl Everett. The marquee names—Pete Rose Jr. is also on the team—help with the gate; the team averages a league-best 6,071 fans. But it's not about money: The average Duck makes about \$2,100 a month. "They're playing to be free agents to all major league teams," says Ducks

G.M. Michael Pfaff. "It's a pretty good deal." Indeed, more than 40 Ducks have signed with big league organizations since 2000, including a few—Carlos Baerga and Bill Pulsipher—who got back to the show.



In Exile Pacman Jones

LAST WEEK NFL commissioner Roger Goodell reminded everyone that Michael Vick hasn't made him forget about another of the league's high-profile miscreants, suspended Titans cornerback Pacman Jones. "I've said to Pacman... 'You have to earn your way back into the National Football League,'" Goodell said. "I was disappointed with some of the activities that Pacman got involved [with] this spring." That hasn't stopped Jones (suspended for the 2007 season) from dabbling in all the usual activities of a moonlighting jock. On Aug. 12 he took part in a TNA wrestling event, and last week he said he and rap producer Spooty will team up on a single called *Let It Shine*. The duo will be called Posterboyz, and the track will be distributed by Jones's National Street League Records. But even that's a problem: The NFL is looking into whether Jones's label name—the NSL—infringes on league copyrights.



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OF ANDY RODDICK



On the tennis court, Andy Roddick holds nothing back. The 2003 U.S. Open champ, ranked No. 4 in the world, lets his intensity show in everything from his body language to his nuclear-powered serve. At home in Austin, Texas, the 25-year-old can let loose a little more with his easygoing personality and wise-cracking sense of humor. He's living a kind of Everyman's dream life, revolving around friends, family and following sports.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE The biggest advantage tennis has as a sport is that fans can get to know an individual personality more. Luckily for me, I've been a [wiseguy] all my life, so that takes care of itself. But when I get on the court, it's a job, and I have a lot of passion for it. Outside the court, I have a little more perspective on things.

A LEGEND FOR A COACH I don't think it'll ever be normal for me. You hang out and practice and eat dinner with Jimmy Connors. But the more I get to know him as a person—and we've developed a pretty strong friendship—he's not the guy everyone sees. He's always pulling out chairs and opening doors and "please and thank you". Very demure. I give that answer sometimes and people seem disappointed.

OPEN ELECTRICITY I love the energy of the U.S. Open, the fact that if you give fans a little bit, they're going to give you every part of themselves. You cruise around Manhattan and see a lot of tennis everywhere. It becomes a part of New York for those two weeks, which I think is really cool.

RED-BLOODED SPORTS FAN I love discussing sports, playing fantasy football, the whole deal. I'm trying to get my fantasy draft done before the Open. My brother's in my league, and Jimmy, and some buddies from home. Jimmy was horrible last year. He finished last. I think he's going to have his son come in and assist him. Hopefully it won't go spiraling downhill fast again.

READY-MADE STYLE The good thing about being with Lacoste is I don't really have to put a lot of thought into what I wear. When I was in high school, my favorite thing was having a school uniform, because you could just get up and put it on. That's sort of like being with Lacoste. You get three pairs of jeans and have 'em send you a bunch of shirts, and then you're set.

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A Higher Goal

Two NHLers try to help in Tanzania By Lisa Altobelli

AN UNDER-sized NHL defenseman who was drafted 208th, the Bruins' Andrew Ference knows about humility, which might explain why he quickly said yes when offered the chance to spend eight days visiting schools and orphanages in AIDS-ravaged Tanzania. Says Ference, 28, of a country where some 1.1 million children have lost one or both parents to the disease, "It was a chance to educate myself and see what life was really like in a Third World country, instead of getting the five-star version sipping cocktails by a pool."

Ference, from Edmonton, was joined by a friend, Panthers defenseman Steve Montador (yellow shirt and below), on a 10-day trip organized by the Toronto-based humanitarian organization Right to Play. Along the way the athletes got some surprises. Some preteen boys at an orphanage borrowed Ference's digital camera and, he says, "recorded a Swahili rap for me and a song by Jay-Z." Another time the players were wending through tall grass when they came across two

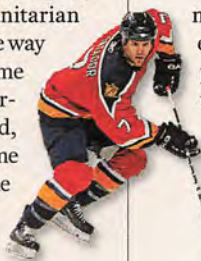


green mamba snakes. "I asked our guide if he had antivenin in case we were bitten," says Ference. "He said, 'Nope, you just lie down and relax. In about 60 seconds you'll die.'"

Besides playing soccer and netball with the kids—Right to Play uses sports to

teach concepts such as "peace building" and "conflict resolution"—Ference and Montador explained hockey, using two, 18-inch-long plastic hockey sticks. Tanzania is an equatorial country where snow is restricted to the peaks of Kilimanjaro. "They held the sticks correctly," says Montador, "but it was hard for them to understand the concept of skates and ice across a large surface."

Other games were laden with health messages and provided the kind of experiences the children desperately need. "While playing, you're hugging and high-fiving them and you almost forget their situation," says Ference. "One day we were playing soccer with about 400 kids around. The staff told us 65 percent of them either had AIDS or were orphaned by it. They're just struggling to survive."



THE QUESTIONS

WITH

Mike Redmond

TWINS CATCHER



What was your welcome-to-the-big-leagues moment? I was

called up [to the Marlins in 1998], and I got to the dugout in the second inning. I shook [manager] Jim Leyland's hand, the coaches' hands. I went down the line to all the guys like, Hey, what's up? I sat on the end of the bench, and 30 seconds later Leyland came down. He goes, "Red, when you're done saying hi to everyone, take your [butt] to the bullpen!"

Your most embarrassing moment? I've put on all my equipment, then left my glove in the dugout.

One thing about being in the big leagues people don't know about? The clubhouse food is overrated.

If I were commissioner for a day, I would . . . get rid of the DH.

If I weren't in the majors, I'd be . . . a cop.

Last Week

Redmond caught Johan Santana's 17-strikeout game against the Rangers.

This Week

The Twins visit the Orioles, against whom Redmond batted .300 last year.

The Pop Culture Grid



How do sports stars fit in?

CD I can't get enough of this summer

Number of hours I slept last night

Summer movie that shouldn't get a sequel

Food that's been in my fridge the longest

Favorite piece of summer clothing

I shouldn't eat ____ but I can't resist



RAUL IBANEZ
Mariners LF

Anything by Third Day



I love all of the sequels.

Frozen steak we meant to grill in May

Quicksilver camouflage shorts

Chicken wings. I love them



WILL HESMER
Crew GK

Stadium Arcadium (Chili Peppers, top)



License to Wed

Protein shakes (six months)

Rainbow sandals

Fried chicken



TOM GORZELANNY
Pirates P

How To Save a Life (The Fray)



Summer Catch

A frozen pizza (a few months)



M&M ice cream sandwiches



NAPOLÉON HARRIS
Chiefs LB

Luvnmusiq (Musiq Soulchild)



Shrek 3

Popeyes chicken (three weeks)

White T-shirt, shorts, Nikes

Strawberry cheesecake



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Mating Season

Pro volleyballers find love on the beach

WHEN THE sports-and-entertainment agent Leonard Armato bought and consolidated the men's and women's pro beach volleyball tours in 2001, he thought he was just making a sound business decision. And maybe he was, but he was also inadvertently becoming a matchmaker. The blending of the divisions inevitably led to fraternization, and there are now 10 couples on the AVP tour. "I liken it to movie stars who spend a lot of time working together," says Armato. "Like Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie after doing *Mr. & Mrs. Smith*." He ought to know: Six years ago Armato married Holly McPeak, a 2004 Olympic bronze medalist who is now a member of the tour's 12th ranked team. As the AVP heads into the Brooklyn Open at Coney Island this weekend, here's a look at how love is shaping the world of beach volleyball.

—Joe Lemire



CASEY JENNINGS

Ranking: 12. 2003's top defensive player



KERRI WALSH

Ranking: 1. Two-time AVP MVP

WHEN THEY first met at a training session, recalls Walsh, "he tried to slam a ball in my face." Now, they've become homebodies, even when they're on the road. Says Walsh, "We are big fans of room service."

MARRIED TWO YEARS



APRIL ROSS

Ranking: 11. 2006 Rookie of the Year



BRAD KEENAN

Ranking: 8. 2006 Rookie of the Year

"SHE HAS the lead in mini golf; I have the lead in chess and H-O-R-S-E," says Keenan. Competitive? Their favorite stop while touring was Savannah, where they wound up at a dive bar playing darts against locals. Alas, Ross laments, "they won."

DATING FIVE MONTHS



SEAN SCOTT

Ranking: 13. Five-time event champ



RACHEL WACHOLDER

Ranked No. 5, second straight year

BOTH WERE coming off relationships when they met at a players' party in Montreal. "Everyone was dancing, drinking," says Wacholder. "We were shy, but as we were leaving, a friend got us to exchange e-mail addresses." A month later they went out.

DATING SINCE 2002



ANGELA LEWIS

Ranking: 18. Five years on tour



ANTHONY MEDEL

Ranking: 9. Fourth in aces in 2006

THEY'VE DATED for 18 months and last week Medel proposed on the sand outside their oceanfront home in Hermosa Beach, Calif. "We're beach bums," said Medel, explaining his proposal spot. "It seemed fitting."

ENGAGED LAST WEEK!

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Secrets and Lies

A film about boxing and truth swings and misses

THE TRAILER for *Resurrecting the Champ*, which opens nationwide this Friday, ends with a voice-over by Josh Hartnett, who plays a sportswriter in the film: "A writer, like a boxer, must stand alone. The truth is

Resurrecting (considering that line in the trailer) seemingly sets out to explore. The movie is based on a 1997 *Los Angeles Times Magazine* article by J.R. Moehringer, who wrote about Tommy Harrison, a homeless man in Santa Ana, Calif., who

man (Samuel L. Jackson) who claims to be Satterfield. Hartnett believes because "Battling Bob's" stories are good—he once broke Rocky Marciano's nose!—and because he sees his boozy interlocutor as a source of career-making copy.

The film to this point has potential as a study in how fighters can, and often must, believe their own lies, and how nonfighters often prefer a legend over the untidy truth. As Moehringer pointed out, Joyce Carol Oates wrote in her 1987 book *On Boxing*, "One of the primary things boxing is about is lying. It's about systematically cultivating a double personality: the self in society, the self in the ring."

But director Rod Lurie (*The Contender*) doesn't go down those roads, at least not far enough. As soon as Hartnett realizes he's been duped and tries to keep the stunt from ruining his career, the film stops being about boxing and becomes a second-rate journalistic thriller, a wannabe *Shattered Glass*. Too bad: Given the depth of the character in Moehringer's story, *Resurrected* coulda been a contender. —Adam Duerson



BUM RAP Hartnett (left) and Jackson never fully explore why the Champ lied.

revealed, and there's nowhere to hide." It's an interesting statement, for it has the ring of truth, but it does not jibe with reality.

Boxing, in fact, is a place where men have often hidden, in plain sight, under an assumed identity, an idea that

for decades passed himself off as Bob Satterfield, a heavyweight of some repute in the 1940s and '50s. A decent fighter in his own right, Harrison, at his manager's urging, boxed under Satterfield's name and continued to say he was the more famous fighter until Moehringer came along.

In *Resurrecting*, Hartnett plays a character who, for a time, falls for the lies of a grizzled old



The Beat

Sopranos star **James Gandolfini** has signed on to play former Nike and Reebok rep **Sonny Vaccaro**, who helped **Michael Jordan**, **Kobe Bryant** and **LeBron James**

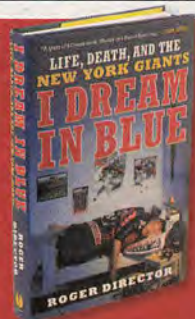
earn millions in mega shoe deals, in HBO's *ABC Camp*. The film is named after the high school camp Vaccaro has run since 1984. When Vaccaro and Gandolfini (right) discussed the role, the actor asked, "There has to be conflict in the movie; how do you feel about that, Sonny?" Vaccaro's answer: "I've been conflicted my whole life!" ... He's holding out of Giants camp, but **Michael Strahan** has been using his time constructively. The defensive end's DIY Network show, *Backyard Stadiums*, premieres on Sept. 5; each week Strahan will demonstrate how to build backyard amusements like batting cages and basketball courts. Guests like the Red Bulls' **Clint Mathis** and former NBA star **Darryl Dawkins** will offer sport-specific advice. But isn't it risky for an athlete to be around all those hammers and saws? "We play it by the book. Safety, safety, safety," Strahan tells SI. "Still, I left my agent at home." —A.D.



Book Watch

I DREAM IN BLUE opens in an unlikely location for a sports memoir—a lawyer's office, as

author Roger Director and his wife, Jan, are working out the details of their will. When asked who they would choose to become legal guardian of their daughter, Jan dutifully offers a list of relatives. Director names Tiki Barber. So begins Director's exploration of his obsession with the New York Giants and why it has become more intense as he advances toward late middle age. Director, a television writer and producer whose credits include *NCIS*, *Mad about You* and *Moonlighting*, spent much of the 2006 season following his favorite team and interviewing players like Barber and Jeremy Shockey—modern-day counterparts, in Director's eyes, of heroes of his youth such as Frank Gifford and Andy Robustelli. Director finds that his fixation on Big Blue is a grasp at the vanishing vestiges of his youth. This is hardly a major revelation, but Director develops the idea with a humanity and humor that even a Redskins fan could appreciate.



—Bill Syken

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Week Ahead

Watch to watch and watch for By Sarah Kwak



THURSDAY 8/23

The Barclays Taking a cue from NASCAR (who'da thunk?), the PGA instituted a playoff series, the four-tournament FedEx Cup, designed to encourage players not to skip regular-season events. Ironically, the guy atop the standings heading into Week 1, Tiger Woods, is skipping the first "postseason" tournament, saying he's "drained" after winning the PGA. No worries for Woods, though: His lead is large enough that he can still win the Cup (*above*) by playing in the remaining three events. (Through Sunday) **Golf Channel and CBS Check listings**

SATURDAY 8/25

Major League Lacrosse Championship Weekend The third-seeded Rochester Rattlers must knock off the Western Conference champs, the L.A. Riptide, to advance to Sunday's title game, but the Rattlers have two things working in their favor: home field advantage (they are hosting the final four) and John Grant Jr. The attackman (*right*) had seven goals and three assists against Boston on Aug. 11, bringing his season point total to a league-record 71. (Philadelphia and Denver play in Saturday's other semi.) Final: Sunday **ESPN2 1 p.m.**



SUNDAY 8/26

Braves at Cardinals St. Louis has jumped back into contention in the NL Central by winning eight of 12. Today's scheduled starter, Adam Wainwright, has been hot in August—the righty has an ERA of 1.96 in his three starts this month. **TBS 2:15 p.m.**



MONDAY 8/27

U.S. Open Eleventh-ranked Marion Bartoli (*left*)—not Amelie Mauresmo—is the Frenchwoman to watch. Mauresmo, who has struggled after winning two majors in 2006, pulled



SUNDAY 8/26

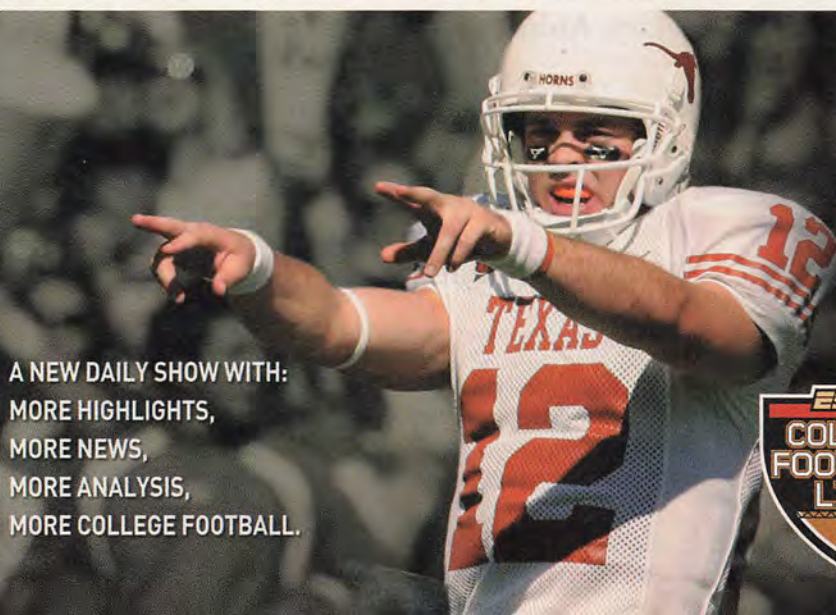
Eagles at Steelers

As they celebrate their 75th anniversaries, the NFL's two Pennsylvania franchises can reflect on their interesting shared history—they merged into the Steagles during World War II—and ponder the questions they now face. Pittsburgh, which finished 8-8 last year and missed the playoffs, is breaking in a new coach (Mike Tomlin) for just the second time in 36 years. And Philadelphia's success rests on the surgically repaired right knee of quarterback Donovan McNabb (*above*), whose preinjury record last year, 5-5, left something to be desired. **NBC 8 p.m.**

out of the Open with groin problems. Bartoli, meanwhile, beat top-seeded Justine Henin to reach the finals at Wimbledon last month. (Through Sept. 9) **USA and CBS Check listings**

TUESDAY 8/28

On Shelves: Blades of Glory DVD Will Ferrell and Napoleon Dynamite himself, Jon Heder, form the first male-on-male figure skating duo in this comedy. With more content (and laughs) in the special features, *Blades* should have triple-Axeled straight to DVD. Highlights include a feature on Hector the Psychofan and a deleted plotline involving the skaters' shared past.



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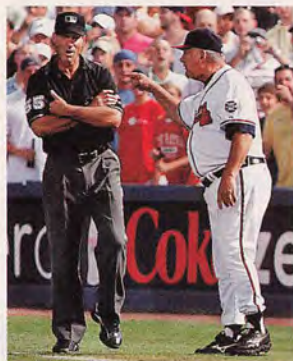
MONDAY-FRIDAY
3:30PM/ET **ESPN**

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Update

The Cox Countdown

WHEN BOBBY COX broke John McGraw's career ejection record of 131 in the fifth inning of Atlanta's 5-4 win over the Giants on Aug. 14, most fans at Turner Field didn't even realize they had witnessed history. The Braves' skipper was in the dug-out when he was quietly tossed by home plate umpire Ted Barrett for arguing a called third strike on Chipper Jones, depriving the crowd of the chance to see Cox go into the books with one of his patented melt-downs. (Imagine Barry Bonds



being informed earlier this year that, due to a clerical error, he already had 756.) "If he was going to get it, I'm glad that it came on behalf of me," said Jones. "Bobby had kind of been biting his tongue lately. He was embarrassed by the record. But it was inevitable. He's too passionate about the game."

Cox had been sitting on 131 for 7½ weeks. But it didn't take him long to get to 133—and he gave fans their money's worth. The night after he set the record, he protested a balk call against Tim Hudson. After much gesticulation, Cox barked something at ump Angel Hernandez (above), who tossed him, putting a little more space between Cox and Tony La Russa, the active manager with the second-most (75) ejections.

Faces in the Crowd



Lisa Winkle

GRAND RAPIDS > Track and Field, Basketball

Winkle, a graduate of Calvin College, is a seven-time track and field All-America (in the long jump, 400 meters, 4×100 and 4×400) and the winner of the Jostens Trophy as the top female student-athlete in Division III basketball. She is the Knights' alltime leader in points (1,722) and rebounds (1,034).



Tim Beckham

KENNESAW, GA. > Baseball

Tim, a senior shortstop at Griffin High, had a triple, a walk and three RBIs and was named the East's most valuable player after a 5-4 win in the Aflac All-American High School Baseball Classic. For the Bears last year he batted .512 with nine doubles, six triples, six home runs, 39 RBIs and 20 stolen bases.

HIGH SCHOOL VIDEOFACE

Spencer Fletcher

LOS ALTOS, CALIF. > Golf

Spencer, a senior at Mountain View High, qualified for the U.S. Amateur with a second-place finish in a sectional tournament. In July he won the Northern California Golf Association Junior Players' Championship with a five-under-par 67 in the final round.

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Brian Johns

RICHMOND, SASKATCHEWAN > Swimming

Johns, a graduate of British Columbia, won three medals at the World University Games: gold in the 200 individual medley, silver in the 4×100 freestyle relay and bronze in the 200 free. The first three-time Canadian Interuniversity Sport swimmer of the year, he won 33 national collegiate gold medals.



Mara Abbott

BOULDER, COLO. > Cycling

Abbott, a senior at Whitman College, won the USA Cycling elite women's road race championship by outsprinting defending champion Kristin Armstrong; the victory qualified her for September's world championships. She is a nine-time collegiate Division II champion.



Rosario Sánchez

SELMA, CALIF. > Track and Field

Sánchez, a graduate of Selma High, won the California shot put title with a distance of 47' 10", becoming the first female state champion from Selma in the 89 years of the meet. Her earlier throw of 50' 5" was third-best nationally last season. She will attend Fresno State in the fall.

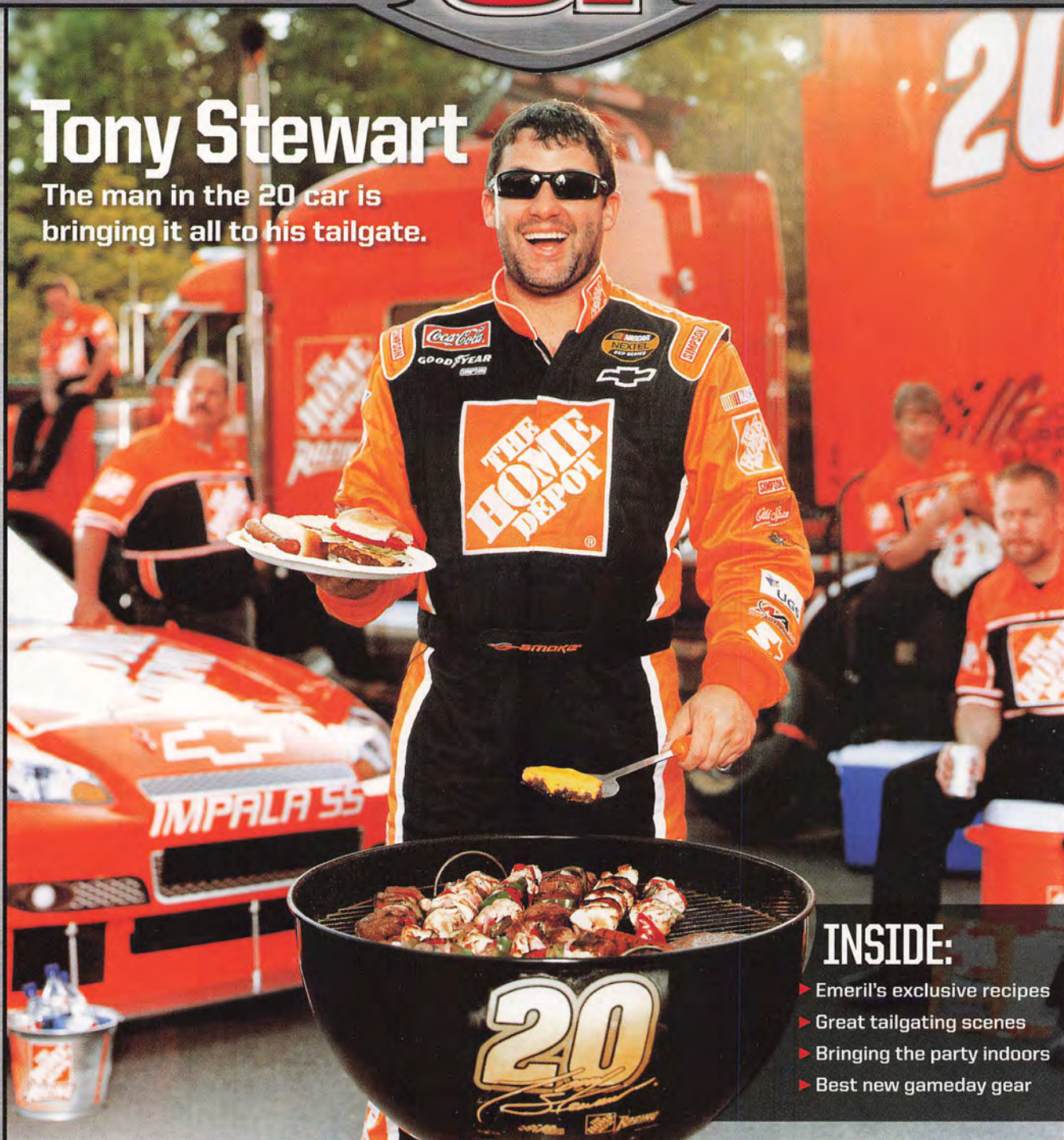
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Tony Stewart

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- ▶ Best new gameday gear



Destinations



Talladega, Alabama

PERHAPS NO TRACK PERSONIFIES NASCAR and its passionate fan base more than Talladega Superspeedway. The 2.6-mile tri-oval sits 40 miles east of Birmingham, in rural Alabama, so unless you've come for the races, you've come to the wrong place. Ask fans of the sport what makes Talladega special, and you'll any number of responses. First, the restrictor-plate racing forces cars to run three to five wide across the track. That in turn leads to massive pileups, often including upwards of 10 to 20 cars.

Ask others, and you'll quickly discover that tailgating in the infield at Talladega is second to none. The 212 acres of land inside the speedway are a case study in insanity. Whether you're parking your RV on Talladega Blvd. (the infield's main drag) or setting up shop between turns 2 and 3, expect craziness to ensue. Beer, beads and creativity abound throughout the infield. From homemade bars and dance floors to painted buses with metal railings welded around the roof, this is where NASCAR's finest come to play. Add Southern-inspired culinary classics like crawfish, pit-barbecued meats, fried green tomatoes and biscuits, and you'll be hooked. If you go, there are three guarantees: You won't leave hungry, you won't want to go home, and you won't be able to wait until the next race. —Lou Dubois

PHOTOS BY KARIM SHAMSI-BASHA



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Columbus, Ohio

AS FAR AS GAMES OF THE CENTURY go, you'd be hard-pressed to find a matchup more titanic than last year's renewal of the Michigan-Ohio State rivalry. These teams' fans love to hate each other. Throw in the fact that both schools entered the game undefeated (Ohio State won 42-39), and that legendary Michigan coach Bo Schembechler had passed away a day earlier, and Columbus seemed to be the center of the universe.

Nowhere was that feeling more visceral than at Hineygate, a Buckeyes pregame staple for the past quarter century. Each Hineygate, 10,000-plus fans pack the parking lot at the Lane Avenue Holiday Inn, a tight square space with a makeshift stage in front of the hotel. Beer flows freely, along with food from midway-like stands set up at the edges of the tailgate. The Danger Brothers (Mike Thompson, Tom Smith, Dave Hessler, Bill Bendler and Tom Beougher), a Columbus-based covers band, has been riling the crowd since Hineygate began, playing two-hour sets pre- and postgame. Though the guys are a little longer in the tooth than when they started, the Dangers still find a raucous groove in classics from the Beatles, Stones, Squeeze and more—and that's not even counting "Hang On Sloop", the unofficial OSU fight song.—Alec Morrison

PHOTOS BY LONDON MORGAN



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Home Tailgate

Bring the fun indoors



TAILGATING IS NO LONGER FOR THE ASPHALT ONLY.

Just because your team is out of town for the week doesn't mean you have to cancel the festivities. Simply bring the fiesta indoors. (Don't forget to warn the wife.) Much like the traditions and staples of your parking lot throwdowns, there are guidelines you should follow to ensure your indoor bash doesn't miss a beat. For these tips, *Tailgate Nation* caught up with Stephen Linn, vice president of the American Tailgater Association and author of the new *Fox Sports Tailgating Handbook*.

01 Write out a checklist. Gather everything you need on one sheet of paper—from the food to the ice to those multicolored team banners. If you end up with warm beer and stale chips, your traditional chest bump after a big play will be a one-man fling.

02 Serve your food buffet-style. An at-home tailgate is not a sit-down affair. Arrange your spread in the kitchen or on a table, and let your guests graze like cattle. Just make sure to keep your food the right temperature and fully stocked.

03 Separate the brews and stews. Food and booze both attract crowds, and you don't want guests fighting over who can get to what. That leads to spilled drinks and frustrated, thirsty friends.

04 Decorate—your house and yourself (pets optional). This is a tailgate party; hang the flags and wear your finest threads as if you were at the game. Just don't wear opposing team colors.

05 Load up on TVs. A good host ensures that guests can always watch the game. If you have only one set, make sure it's in a central place where everybody can see. Better yet, ask your friends to bring over a TV or two to scatter around the house and in the bathrooms. Your friends will love you, at least for the day.

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The Big Easy's Cookin'

Chef Emeril Lagasse and Saints QB Drew Brees
tailgate with friends at the Louisiana Superdome

Photo by Kareem Black





SPECIAL THANKS TO THE LOUISIANA SUPERDOME, THE SAINTSATIONS, HARRY MAYRONNE (BAND) AND VIKING GRILLS



Emeril's Eats

Recipes

ONE YEAR AFTER HURRICANE KATRINA

battered the Gulf Coast region, the city of New Orleans had one of the best feel-good stories in recent sports memory. Last season, the New Orleans Saints went from a 3-13 record in 2005 to a 10-6 record and a trip to the NFC championship. Led by new quarterback Drew Brees, the Saints became a symbol of renewed hope and rebuilding in the Crescent City. And perhaps no Saints fan loved it more than world-renowned chef, restaurateur and Food Network star Emeril Lagasse. Despite a schedule as packed as a Chinese dinner menu, Emeril makes a point of attending every Saints home game with friends, a tradition he's upheld for the last 10 seasons. And when you combine a great chef with great football, the outcome is one heck of a pregame tailgate party, as evidenced by his photo shoot with *Tailgate Nation*. Emeril came on board for this year's edition with his list of the ultimate tailgating recipes, tips and setups, all with a little New Orleans flair. *TN* caught up with Emeril and Brees in early May for a photo/video shoot outside the Superdome, where the chef demonstrated how he takes the pregame ritual and kicks it up a notch. —Lou Dubois



Grilled Chicken Taco Bar

- ¾ cup plus 3 teaspoons olive oil
- ¾ cup chopped yellow onion
- ¾ cup cilantro leaves
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 2 teaspoons Emeril's Southwest Essence
- ½ teaspoon ground Chipotle chili pepper powder
- 1½ teaspoons Kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon dried Mexican oregano
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- 1¾ - 2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed
- 12 to 16 taco shells, either crisp or soft white or yellow corn tortillas, warmed
- Diced vine-ripened tomatoes, for garnishing
- Shredded iceberg lettuce, chopped red onion, thinly sliced jalapeno peppers, Lime wedges, sour cream, guacamole (all for garnishing)
- Emeril's Original Salsa, or your favorite salsa, for serving
- Grated cheese, for serving, such as cheddar, pepper jack, or queso blanco
- Cilantro leaves, for serving

In a food processor or blender, combine six tablespoons of olive oil, chopped onion, a quarter cup of the cilantro leaves, garlic, lime juice, Southwest Essence, chipotle chili pepper powder, half teaspoon of the kosher salt, Mexican oregano and cumin and puree it all until smooth. Place mixture in a resealable plastic food storage bag and add chicken, ensuring that each thigh is evenly coated with the marinade. Transfer to refrigerator to marinate at least two hours and up to six hours.

Preheat a grill to medium-high heat. Remove the chicken thighs from the marinade and season on all sides with the remaining teaspoon of kosher salt. Grill the thighs, covered if your grill has a lid, and turning as needed, until just cooked through, approximately seven to nine minutes. Remove chicken from the grill and transfer to a cutting board to let it rest briefly. Lightly brush tortillas with some of the remaining oil and grill briefly to warm (otherwise warm as directed on tortilla packaging.) Transfer to a shallow bowl and cover with aluminum foil to keep warm until you are ready to serve the tacos.

When ready to serve, slice the grilled chicken thighs into thin strips and assemble the remaining condiments so that each guest may prepare his or her own taco according to taste.

Yield: 12 to 16 tacos

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2. Brush wings with Frank's® RedHot® Buffalo Wing Sauce.



GRILLED SAUSAGE AND HASS AVOCADO SANDWICH

With Spicy Chipotle Honey Mustard Sauce



SERVES 4

½ large red onion, sliced into 1/2-inch thick rounds

1 tbsp. olive oil

4 sandwich-size, pre-cooked sausage links, split lengthwise

4 French rolls, cut in half lengthwise

1 large, ripe Hass avocado

2 lemons, juiced

1. Brush onions with olive oil and grill over medium-hot coals 4 to 5 minutes per side or until soft and cooked through. Remove from grill. Once the onions cool, break up the rings. Set aside.

2. Grill sausage links over medium-hot coals until browned on each side, about 5 minutes.

3. At the same time, toast the split rolls on the grill, cut side down.

4. Cut avocado in half. Cut each half into four slices and remove peel. Place in shallow bowl and pour on lemon juice.

5. Spread both sides of roll with Spicy Chipotle Honey Mustard Sauce. Place grilled sausage on the roll and top with two Hass avocado slices and grilled onions.

6. Wrap in sandwich paper and serve.

SPICY CHIPOTLE HONEY MUSTARD SAUCE

1 cup prepared honey mustard

1 or more canned Chipotle peppers in Adobo sauce, mashed (number of peppers determined by the level of spiciness desired)

1. In a medium bowl, combine honey mustard and mashed Chipotle pepper(s) to make sauce. Stir until mixed well.

*A large avocado averages about 8 ounces. If using smaller or larger size avocados adjust the quantity accordingly.



Emeril's Eats



Paella Mixta

¼ cup olive oil (divided)

1½ tablespoons Emeril's Original Essence (divided)

1¼ teaspoons salt

8 chicken thighs

1 pound chorizo sausage (diced into quarter half-moons)

1 cup each small red bell peppers, small green bell peppers (diced)

2 tablespoons garlic (minced)

1 teaspoon saffron threads

1 quart chicken stock

2 cups medium-grain rice

1 pound jumbo shrimp (shell on, backs split)

½ pound mussels (scrubbed well and de-bearded)

1 cup frozen green peas (thawed)

Set a paella pan or large sauté pan over medium-high heat and add two tbsp. olive oil. Meanwhile, season the chicken with one tbsp. of the Essence and one tsp. of salt. Once oil is hot, sear chicken in the pan until well caramelized, about four minutes per side. Remove chicken and set aside. Add the rest of the olive oil with chorizo to the pan and sear, stirring occasionally, until well caramelized, about seven minutes.

Add the onions and peppers to the pan and sweat until softened, about five minutes. Add the garlic and saffron and return the chicken to the pan as well. Pour the stock in and bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to medium and cook the chicken for 10 minutes. Add rice to the pan and carefully stir to incorporate. Continue to cook the rice for 15 minutes.

Season the shrimp with the remaining Essence and quarter teaspoon of salt and add to the pan with the mussels, tucking them under the rice. Continue to cook until the shrimp turn pink and the mussels begin to open, about five minutes. Add the peas, lower heat to low and continue to cook paella until a crust begins to form on the bottom of the pan, about five to seven minutes longer. Serve while hot.

Yield: 8 full servings

Brazilian-style Red Beans

1 tablespoon olive oil

4 strips bacon (thickly cut)

½ pound smoked sausage (cut into half-inch circles)

1½ cups yellow onion (diced)

1 cup each of green and red bell peppers (diced)

1 tablespoon garlic (minced)

1 pound red kidney beans (soaked overnight and drained)

2 bay leaves

8 cups chicken stock (or water)

½ teaspoon each salt and fresh-cracked black pepper

Set a large Dutch oven over medium heat and add olive oil. Once hot, add the bacon to the pan and cook, stirring occasionally until most of the fat has rendered and bacon is crispy, about seven to eight minutes. Add sausage to the pan and cook until lightly caramelized, about five minutes. Add onions, green and red bell peppers to pan and cook, stirring occasionally until wilted and lightly caramelized, about 10 minutes. Place the garlic in the pan and cook until fragrant, about one minute. Add red beans, bay leaves and chicken stock and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium low and continue to cook the beans, stirring occasionally, until most of the water has been absorbed and beans are tender, about 2½ hours. Season with the salt and pepper and serve over white rice, if desired.

Yield: 2½ quarts beans, 6 to 8 servings



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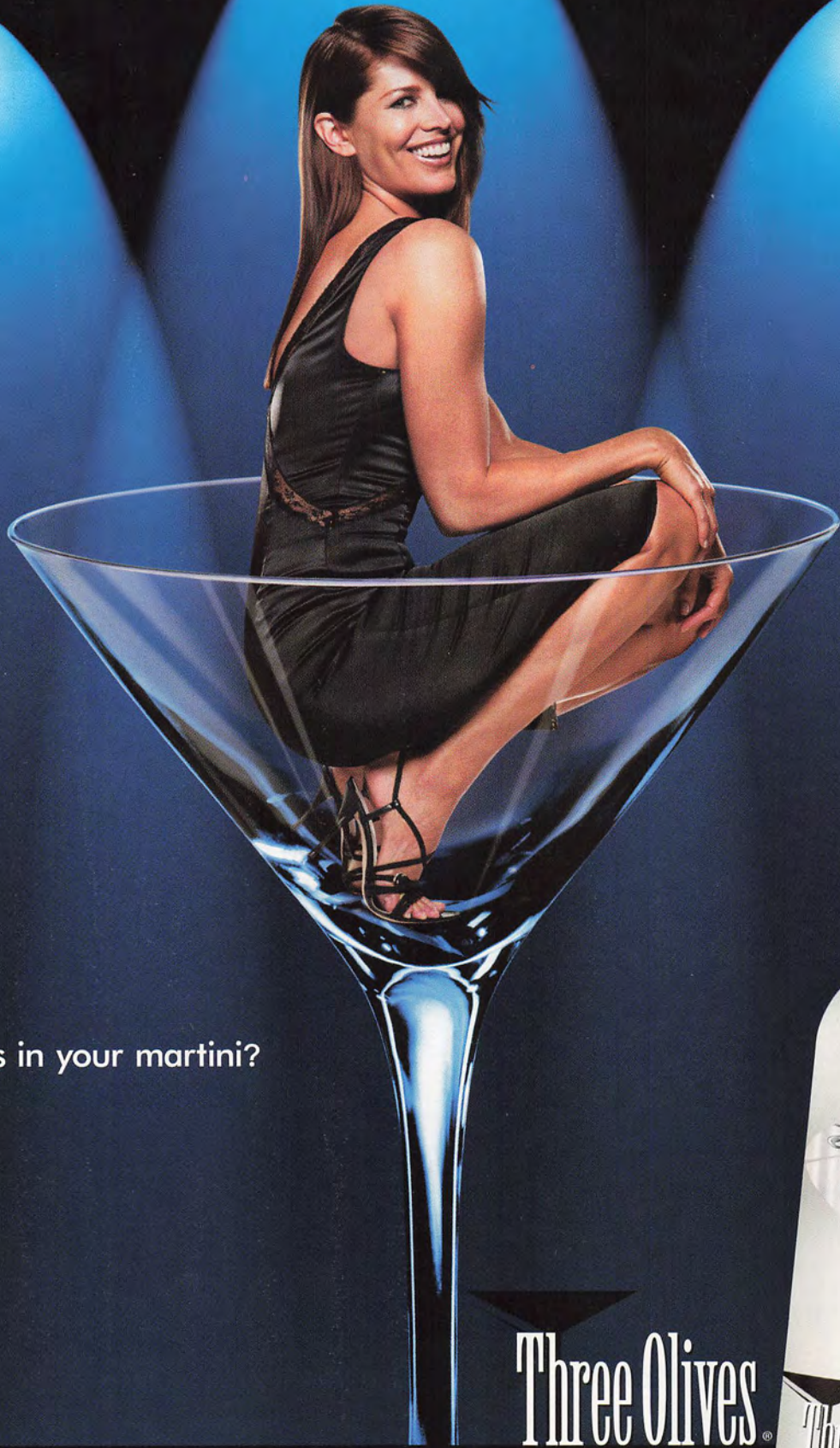
The Rocket

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4 ounces club soda

Splash of cranberry juice

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04 DIRECTV Sat-Go (recommended by the American Tailgater Association) When you're tailgating, why listen to the pregame on the radio when you can watch it on a 17-inch screen? The world's first portable TV with available reception of satellite signals (for DIRECTV customers) lets you watch football as you chow down in the parking lot; directv.com, \$1,499

05 TrackPack Cooler (ATA-recommended) Hey, beer man! This backpack-cooler has an internal frame that can organize and dispense four different types of 12-ounce cans—and hold 20 cans total. You'll never again need to bend down for a cold one; trackpackcoolers.com, \$39.99

06 Swing'n Smoke MVP 9000 by Party King Grills (ATA-recommended) This easily portable grill includes an umbrella holder and ice chest tray, all of which sit on a hitch-mounted moveable arm. With 540 square inches of grilling and warming space, this convenient grill truly is fit for a king; partykinggrills.com, \$499.99

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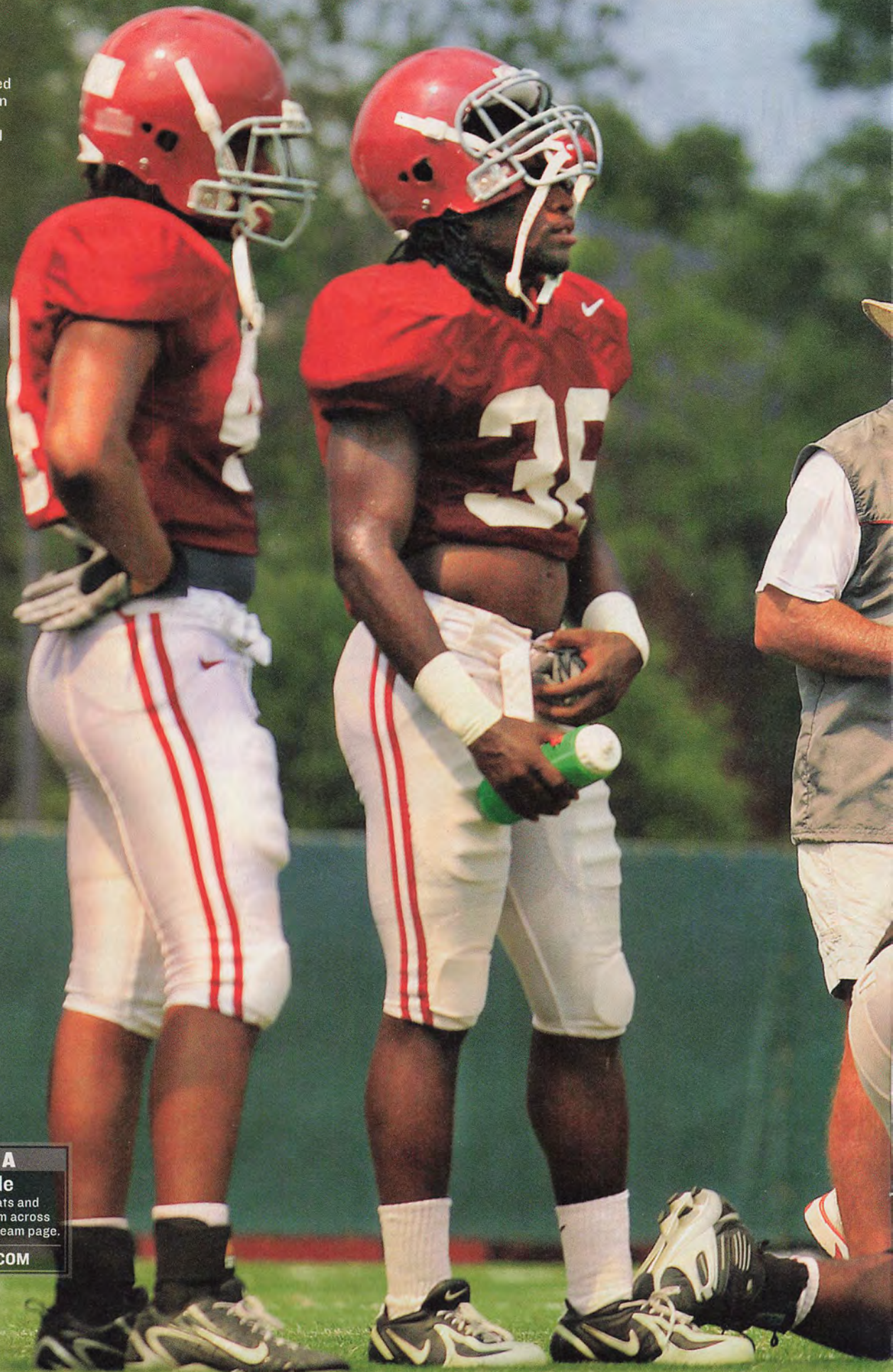
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FIELD GOAL

A quarter century after Bryant coached his last game, Saban looks to return Alabama to national prominence.

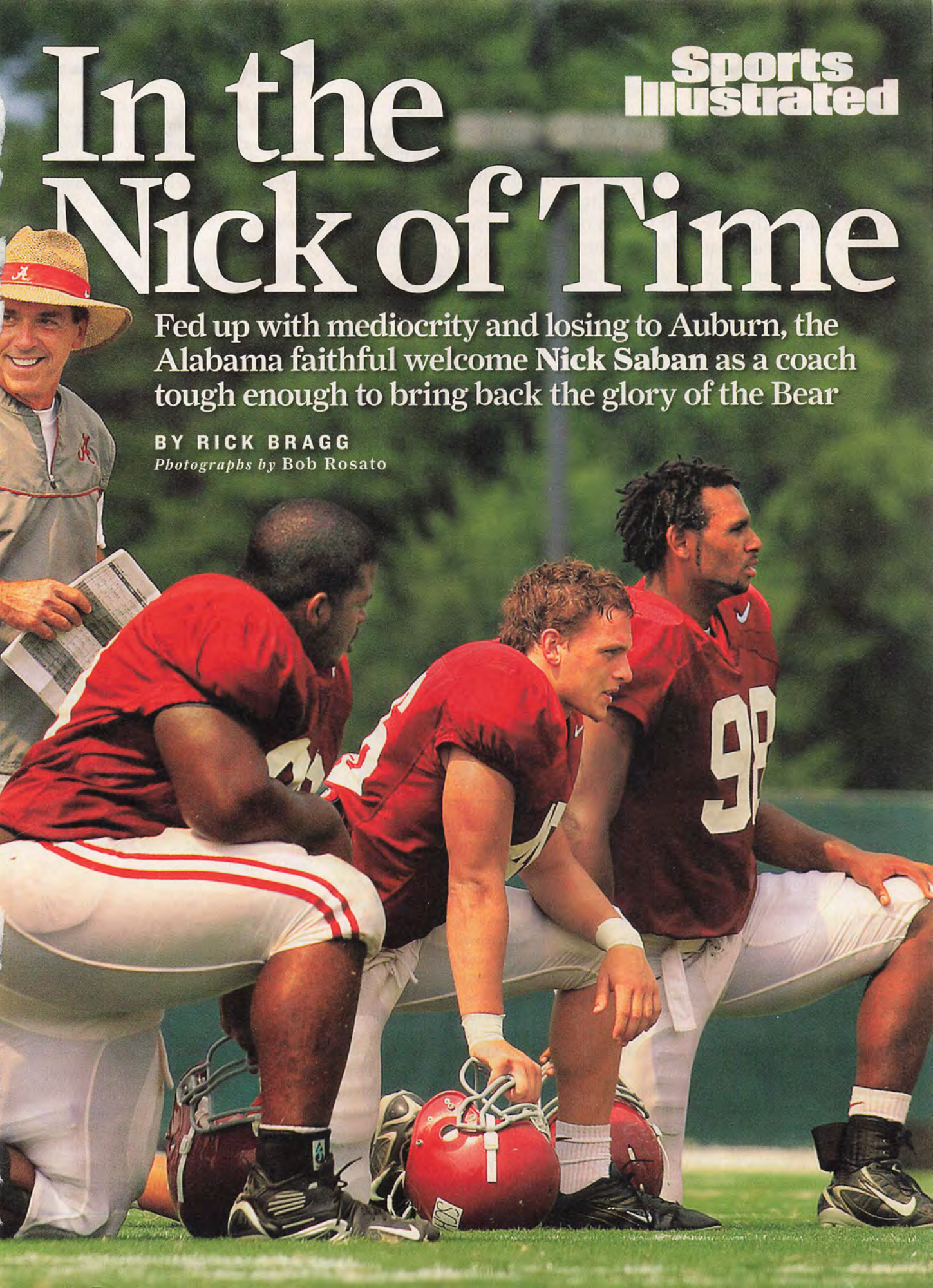


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**Sports
Illustrated**

In the Nick of Time

Fed up with mediocrity and losing to Auburn, the Alabama faithful welcome **Nick Saban** as a coach tough enough to bring back the glory of the Bear

BY RICK BRAGG

Photographs by Bob Rosato

THEY SAY college football is religion in the Deep South, but it's not. Only religion is religion. Anyone who has seen an old man rise from his baptism, his soul all on fire, knows as much, though it is easy to see how people might get confused. But if football were a faith anywhere, it would be here on the Black Warrior River in Tuscaloosa, Ala. And now has come a great revival.

The stadium strained with expectation. The people who could not find a seat stood on the ramps or squatted in the aisles, as if it were Auburn down there, or Tennessee, and when the crowd roared, the sound really did roll like thunder across the sky. A few blocks away 73-year-old Ken Fowler climbed to his second-story terrace so he could hear it better and stood in the sunlight as that lovely roar fell all around him. He believes in the goodness and rightness of the Crimson Tide the way people who handle snakes believe in the power of God, but in his long lifetime of unconditional love, of Rose Bowl trains, Bobby Marlow up the middle and the Goal Line Stand, he never heard anything like this. His Alabama was

their past—the 21 Southeastern Conference championships, the 12 national championships, the Team of the 20th Century (as *The Wall Street Journal* called the Crimson Tide in 2000).

Saban has not promised them so much—“I don't believe in predictions,” he says—but they believe. It may take two years, three, more, to be in the discussion again when people talk about the best teams in college football. But they know he will take them home.

“I've been on this roller coaster for a long time,” says Fowler, a self-made businessman who could live a lot of places but settled on a house so close to the campus that he can all but see his reflection in the

But it is time, past time, to love again.

“There is never anything wrong with remembering the past, but you can't live in it,” says Mal Moore, the Alabama athletic director who was all but dragged through saw briars when it appeared that Saban and other marquee names—most notably West Virginia coach Rich Rodriguez—were passing Alabama by. Then on Jan. 3 he brought Saban home with him on the school jet from Miami, where Saban had been coaching the Dolphins. People who had been calling for Moore's resignation praised his leadership.

There is no nice way to say it: The Alabama faithful are done with waiting, with mediocrity and with disappointment. They are sick of Auburn, which has beaten them five years in a row; bone weary of NCAA investigations and probations reaching back to 1993; and finished with coaches who cannot gut out the expectations here, or who might have done well, someday, with more time or a railroad car full of luck.

“We wanted a man who had won a championship, and Nick Saban is that



HOT TOPICS The spring game (opposite) drew a record crowd of 92,000, while Saban banned discussion of the stifling conditions at preseason practice.

playing before the largest football crowd in state history, and playing only itself. “We had 92,000,” he said, “for a scrimmage.”

It felt good. It felt like it used to feel.

They came from Sand Mountain, the wire grass, the Black Belt, the Gulf Coast and just wide places in the road. They came in motor homes, private jets, \$30,000 pick-up trucks, \$400 cars and dime-store flip-flops to see Nick Saban walk the sideline of Bryant-Denny Stadium in April.

They have welcomed him as Caesar, as pharaoh, and paid him enough money to burn a wet dog. Now he will take them forward by taking them back to the glory of

go-go boots of the Crimsonettes as they strut down University Boulevard before the homecoming game. “In the '50s, under coach J.B. (Ears) Whitworth, we went 14 games without a win, and I watched grown men cry. People said then there would never be another coach here as good as Wallace Wade [who won national championships in 1925, '26 and '30] or Frank Thomas [1934, '41]. They said it was over.

“Then in '58 we hired a coach who could do the things we needed to put us in a position to win SEC championships again and national championships again. People used to stare at him as he stood on the sideline, too, like he was about to turn a stick into a snake.”

His name was Paul Bryant, and he was popular here. They named an animal after him. How people loved that man.

and more,” says Moore. “Saban brings a sense of command, a sense of toughness and discipline.”

SABAN IS no rainmaker, no snake oil salesman. The way to his mountain-top is hard and paved with woe. “We can be part of something, build something all these people can be proud of and excited about again,” says the 55-year-old coach, who can look intense even when he is not mad and probably looks that way holding a kitten. “I got on our guys in a team meeting. I said, ‘I'm tired of hearing all this talk about a national championship when you guys don't know how to get in out of the rain, don't know what to do in the classroom.’ It's like you've got little kids in the backseat, saying, ‘Are we there yet?’

“The journey itself is important, not just



Fowler had never heard anything like this. His Alabama was playing before the largest football crowd in state history, and playing itself. IT FELT GOOD. It felt like it used to feel.

the destination. You have to follow direction. Discipline, off-season recruiting, conditioning, practice, more recruiting, player development, classroom development. I'm not interested in what should be, could be, was. I'm interested in what is, what we control. And when we lose—and we will, one game, two, or more—we have to have a trust that what we are doing will work, trust and belief in who we are. And you get where you're going, one mile marker at a time."

People here believe Saban is tough and smart and do not care that he can seem impatient, if not angry, when dealing with the media or hangers-on or just about anybody else, as if he has more important things to do. Like coaching football. In a state where some old men still test their truck's electrical system by grabbing hold of a hot coil wire, football coaches are not supposed to

be in touch with their inner child. Saban won a national championship at LSU in 2003, out of a conference where every game can feel like a knife fight in a ditch. No one cares how he did in charm school.

One LSU fan told Alabama fan Sammy Maze that Saban could be, well, a little difficult. "You know he's a son of a bitch?" the LSU fan said.

"Well," Maze said, "he's our son of a bitch now."

Never assume that Alabamans give a damn what others think. "People can write and say that this exemplifies a fanaticism that needs to be curbed," says Fowler, who would have gone to the Tide's intrasquad scrimmage himself if it had not been broadcast live on television. "All Alabama proved, with 92,000 people at a practice, is that nobody loves football better. I don't see

how that somehow makes us subhuman. I mean, in some countries they kill soccer players, don't they?"

Saban has yet to coach a down for the Crimson Tide, but people are already naming their children for him. Tim and Hannah Witt of Hartselle, Ala., named their baby boy, born March 20, Saban Hardin Witt. They already had a son named Tyde. "At first I thought my husband was crazy," says Hannah, "but it grew on me."

In these parts you do not name a child for a coach you expect to go 8–5. The Witts had talked at first about naming their second son Bear.

HANK WILLIAMS once said he could throw his cowboy hat onto the stage of the Grand Ole Opry after he finished *Lovesick Blues* and it would get at least one curtain call. It has been that way for decades in Tuscaloosa, except the hat is houndstooth.

Will Nevin, a first-year law student, places an offering the night before every game at the feet of Bryant's statue in front of the football stadium. He and his friends leave a bag of Golden Flake potato chips and an old-fashioned glass bottle of Coca-Cola, the sponsors of Bryant's old TV show. Nevin, 21, never saw the show, never saw Bryant on the sideline. But the image of the Bear is alive in his mind's eye. He just knows how it must have been, like hearing someone tell you how sweet an old Mustang used to run, before it was put up on blocks in the barn and covered with a tarp. The most you can do is run your hand over the paint and imagine.

It seems like a dream now: From 1958 through 1982 there were six national championships, 13 SEC titles, a 232–46–9 overall record, a 19–6 mark against Auburn and a stable of immortals that included Billy Neighbors, Lee Roy Jordan, Joe Namath, Kenny Stabler, John Hannah, Ozzie Newsome, many others. But the Bryant magic was about more than numbers, more than X's and O's and big ol' boys who would have blocked a pulpwood truck if he'd asked them to. It was about how he could draw every eye in the stadium to him as he leaned against that goalpost during warmups, a growling, mumbling golem glued together out of legend, gristle and a little bit of mean. It was almost cheating, having him on the sideline, like filling your trunk full of cement blocks before a demolition derby.

After a quarter century of dominance

Bryant retired after the 1982 season with a 21–15 win over Illinois at the Liberty Bowl in Memphis, in the freezing cold. Less than a month later he was dead, as if his life was hard-wired to the game. One paper sent reporters to interview the grave digger, and on Bryant's burial day people stood on the overpasses and the roadside, hands over their hearts, to watch a hearse take away one of the best parts of their history.

At any flea market in Dixie, you can still find Bryant commemorative plates. At every roadside bar, church basement rec room or courthouse café, you can hear this joke:

Guy gets into heaven. Sees an old man in a houndstooth hat walking on water.

"Hey," he asks Saint Peter, "is that Bear Bryant?"

"Naw," Pete says, "that's God. He just thinks he's Bear Bryant."

NEVIN WILL always love the idea of Bear and always honor his legend, but it is clear that praying to a memory, however fine, has not worked amid so many missing elements. "We want something to celebrate," says Nevin. "By God, it's our right."

In one of the most storied, demanding and impatient programs in college football, the comparison with Bryant has smothered the coaches who've come after him. With the exception of his protégé, Gene Stallings, who delivered a national championship in '92, schooling trash-talking Miami 34–13 in the Sugar Bowl, men have perished in the shadow of Bear. It is his taped voice, God-like, that still booms across Bryant-Denny Stadium at the start of every home game: "I ain't never been nothin' but a winner."

But Saban totes his own national championship prestige into Tuscaloosa—the first Bryant successor to do so—and a résumé that Alabama was willing to spend a reported \$32 million over eight years to procure. "I don't think Saban's afraid of the past," says Kirk McNair, founder and editor of *Bama* magazine, who has covered Crimson Tide football across five decades. "I don't think he cares."

Saban is 91-42-1 as a college coach, in stops at Toledo, Michigan State and LSU—all rebuilding jobs. LSU had had only three winning seasons in 11 years when he took over in November 1999. Four years later he coached the Tigers to the pinnacle of college football. His 48 wins from 2000 through '04 ranked third among major col-



It is unlikely any booster will look into Saban's drill-bit eyes and tell him, "That AIN'T THE WAY the Bear did it."

lege coaches over that span. The Tigers were SEC champs in '01 and again in '03, when they went on to beat Oklahoma 21–14 to win the BCS national title. Saban builds his teams methodically, on a backbone of conditioning, rigid discipline and a swarming, ball-stealing defense.

He leads like a tough-minded CEO. Listening to him, you get the feeling you would not want him to decide your fate if

SIGN OF THE TIMES Alabama fans young and old waited in line to get Saban's autograph after a practice in early August.

your job production was down and your equipment obsolete. The lore of football, the poetry of it, does not complicate his language. But he knows that before the kickoff of Alabama's season opener with Western Carolina on Sept. 1, thousands of Crimson Tide fans, especially the ones who remember, will look to the goalpost and miss the coach who led them so grandly for so long. It should be that way.

"[Bryant] accomplished as much as anybody ever has," says Saban. "He is someone you respect, admire and appreciate. He established the standard of excellence, him and the players who gave their blood, sweat and tears."

"That, in itself, has no effect on the future," says Saban, who knows that no ghost, or alumnus, has ever thrown a halfback for a loss. "We have to do the work now."

Saban will not go into great detail about his team, any more than he will discuss his opponents. There is no profit in it. But it is clear that 2007 is a true rebuilding year, with a typically tough SEC schedule. Alabama goes against Vanderbilt, Arkansas, Georgia and Ole Miss in the first half of its SEC schedule, then Tennessee, LSU, Mississippi State and Auburn. A Sept. 29 game against Florida State in Jacksonville is not exactly a nonconference breather.

It may be a team unfamiliar to fans used to seeing the Tide carried by a talented defense. Alabama lost too many big, fast, scary people. "If you can't stop the run in the SEC, you're in trouble," says Mitch Dobbs, the assistant editor of *Bama* magazine, and a lot of the middle is just gone.

But instead of an offense that was too often effective only between the 20s, Alabama may show off a little with junior quarterback John Parker Wilson and a corps of game-breaking receivers. The offensive line, which bore criticism—well, let's face it, scorn—is expected to be less porous. And a redshirt freshman named Terry Grant, a former Mr. Football from Mississippi, runs like something bad is after him.

Concerns that Alabama's defense would be leaner this year materialized in summer practices, but the offense moved the ball smoothly in scrimmages on days when the temperature reached 106° and 107°. No matter how hot it got, however, Alabama players

did not complain. Saban and his coaches would not allow their players to even use the word *hot* or *heat* in conversation.

Alabama's athletes could have made Saban's summer a little cooler if they had behaved better off the field. Simeon Castille, an all-SEC cornerback, was arrested early last Sunday in an entertainment district near campus and charged with disorderly conduct. The police were not talking about precisely what Castille had done, and Saban indicated that he will handle the matter internally. Three other players—defensive linemen Brandon Deaderick and Brandon Fannery and running back Roy Upchurch, all reserves—were charged after a disturbance in July.

Saban might not coach the Tide to im-

says. It is the only time in almost an hour and a half of discussion about football that Saban does not talk about work ethic, goals, discipline. "It was . . . emotional."

Saban is not surprised that Alabamans agree with his ideas on what it takes to win. He grew up in coal mining country in West Virginia, pumped gas and broke down tires at a filling station his father owned. "The worst I could ever do is go back to West Virginia and pump gas again," he says. "Life's been pretty good to me."

He understands that in Alabama people believe you have to work for what you get. "The best thing about winning the championship at LSU was that it gave people hope, something to be proud of," he says. "I don't wear the ring. It wasn't a personal accom-

IT WAS always a tough room.

Alabama's first coach, E.B. Beaumont, went 2-2 in 1892. "We therefore got rid of him," says the 1894 school yearbook.

It was hard-nosed Wallace Wade who took Alabama to its first recognized national championship, in 1925, when his undefeated team beat Washington 20-19 in the Rose Bowl, the first time a Southern team had ever played in the game. Alabama won more national titles—and Rose Bowls—under Wade in '26 and '30. His successor, Frank Thomas, who had learned his football as a quarterback for Knute Rockne at Notre Dame, took Alabama to Pasadena three more times, won a widely recognized national title in '34—with Paul Bryant playing end—and a still-debated title in '41. Some fans say

Following the Bear

The men who have led Alabama since Paul Bryant retired had winning records, but only one won it all



RAY PERKINS
1983-86
32-15-1



BILL CURRY
1987-89
26-10



GENE STALLINGS*
1990-96
62-25**



MIKE DUBOSE
1997-2000
24-23



DENNIS FRANCHIONE
2001-02
17-8



MIKE SHULA
2003-06
26-23

* Won national title in 1992 ** Includes change in 1993 record from 9-3-1 to 1-12 after NCAA uncovered violations regarding the eligibility of a player

probable wins, say Alabama fans. But he will not lose the handle on the games that are winnable and leave Alabama at the ugly end of a soul-killing upset. That is what they want from him, at least right now. In any event, it is unlikely any booster will look into Saban's drill-bit eyes and tell him, "That ain't the way Bear did it."

From the moment Saban was hired, there has been an electricity, a high-stakes poker feel to his every move. In Miami and on the national talk-show circuit he was badmouthed and lambasted for adamantly denying, as the Dolphins' season wound to its 6-10 conclusion, that he would be the Alabama coach, then turning around and taking the job. He was called a liar, a snake and other pleasantries. Of the firestorm he says, "We gave up a little bit to be here."

Then on April 21 Saban walked onto the field for the intrasquad game to that thunder, the pure and positive manifestation of the expectations at Alabama. "There is something special about this place," he

plishment. But I think the people of Alabama understand what it takes to be successful, understand persistence, overcoming adversity, mental and physical toughness."

Saban does not see himself as mean, brusque or distant: "I think most people who get to know me don't have that feeling." His wife, Terry, told him there might be a slight gap between how he sees himself and how others see him. That, she told him, "is your blind spot. And it's as wide as the Grand Canyon."

"And she wasn't even mad at me," Saban says.

There is no gap between what he wants and what Alabama wants. While "the name of the stadium's not going to change," says McNair, smiling, he believes that Saban, one Saturday at a time, will realign the program with its rich past. "It's been a long, long time since I had this good a feeling."

To find the source of Alabama's hunger, you have to go back further than the Bear. You have to go by train.

Thomas's best team was the undefeated Rose Bowl-winning squad in '45.

They were college boys in suits, but on the trips home from California, across Texas and the lower South, people stood beside the railroad tracks, waving and cheering. It was Faulkner's South, Huey P. Long's and the Klan's. Night riders in sheets still enforced their doomed ideals, and mill workers spun cotton all week for pocket change. Writers from the North and the West would question if it was wise to open the nation's premier bowl game quite so often to the unsophisticated South.

"Columbia or Pennsylvania would make a much better game with the Pacific Coast Conference representative for the 1946 Rose Bowl than would Alabama and, in addition, such a game would have that intangible thing called 'class,' something it can never have with a southern club being one of the participants," wrote Dick Hyland in the *Los Angeles Times*. "Me, I'm kinda tired of hillbillies and swamp students in the Rose Bowl."

But from beside the tracks, people waved and waved. Reconstruction had faded into the Depression, and not much had changed. "It became our culture," says Doug Jones, the former U.S. attorney who successfully prosecuted two Klansmen for the infamous 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham. "We were a poor state, with a great darkness in our history, but we took a team by train across the nation and played the best and beat the best."

From 1947 through '54 Harold (Red) Drew kept winning at Alabama, but it is a testament to the expectations here that a coach who went 45-28-7 with berths in the Sugar, Orange and Cotton bowls would be considered subpar. Over the next three years, under J.B. Whitworth, it got much worse. He was a nice man, people said, but he was 4-24-2. They needed something else.

Bryant always said his impetus for winning was the fear that he'd have to go home to a plow in Fordyce, Ark. In December '57, after having coached at Maryland, Kentucky and Texas A&M, he came to Alabama. "One year [my family and I] were in Miami, and Auburn happened to be playing the Hurricanes," says Fowler. "I walked out on the beach, and there were all these Auburn people. It was terrible. I looked up as one of these little planes went by pulling a banner, EAT AT JOE'S STONE CRABS, or something, and I got to thinking. The next day the Auburn people were still there, and a plane flies over, and it says ATTENTION AUBURN, THE BEAR LIVES. I don't remember what it cost, but it was pittance for what I got for it."

There was a swagger then. "I had an Auburn friend, Spiro Gregory (Speedy) Mastoras," Fowler says. "He would tell me, after another Auburn loss [to Alabama], 'Wait till year after next.' He knew that next year was out of reach."

What a shame it couldn't last forever.

EXCEPT FOR Stallings, no coach after Bryant lasted more than four years. Bear's successor was Ray Perkins, a wideout on the 1964 and '65 national championship teams, who went 32-15-1 and forever angered fans when he pulled down the tower from which Bryant would watch practice. It went back up after Perkins left. Bill Curry went 26-10 and was never beloved. (An 0-3 record against Auburn didn't help.) Stallings won his title and 70 games, but the record book reads 62-25 after the NCAA stripped eight wins and a tie from the

'93 season, when a player was found to have had improper dealings with an agent.

Then came everything but locusts. Mike Dubose, mired in a harassment scandal that the university would settle, went 24-23 as the NCAA investigated booster Logan Young's involvement in the recruitment of

LOUD AND CLEAR Saban says he doesn't make predictions, but he's well aware of the high expectations of Alabama fans.



"I don't think Saban's AFRAID OF THE PAST," says McNair. "I don't think he cares."

a Memphis tackle named Albert Means. Dubose resigned under pressure after he lost homecoming to Central Florida.

Dennis Franchione fled after two years (17-8) as NCAA sanctions became a crippling reality. He left for Texas A&M, and one Alabama fan, Morgan Plott, felt so betrayed that he went to Norman, Okla., to see A&M get whipped 77-0 by the Sooners in 2003. "I wanted to see Coach Fran get beat," says Plott, "but I didn't know it would be that good." Alabama brought in Mike

Price, who forgot he was in the Bible Belt and was let go after a visit to a topless bar, having never coached a game for the Tide. Then, in a hurry, Mike Shula was hired.

People liked Shula, who had won a lot of games as a Tide quarterback in the '80s. But, again, this is no business for a nice young man. Hamstrung by probation that was an earlier regime's doing, Shula went 26-23 in four years. He was fired last November, after his fourth straight loss to Auburn. As it became clear that the program was losing ground, fans grew weary of players who talked big and did not do much, talked about realizing their potential and showcasing their talents, and then got beat on the line of scrimmage by Mississippi State.

THE EXPECTATIONS are cemented into the architecture. Four bronze giants watch over the promenade in front of Bryant-Denny Stadium. Here stand Wade, Thomas, Stallings and, of course, Bryant. But because this is Alabama, there is space left for a fifth pedestal. "How could it not be?" says Moore.

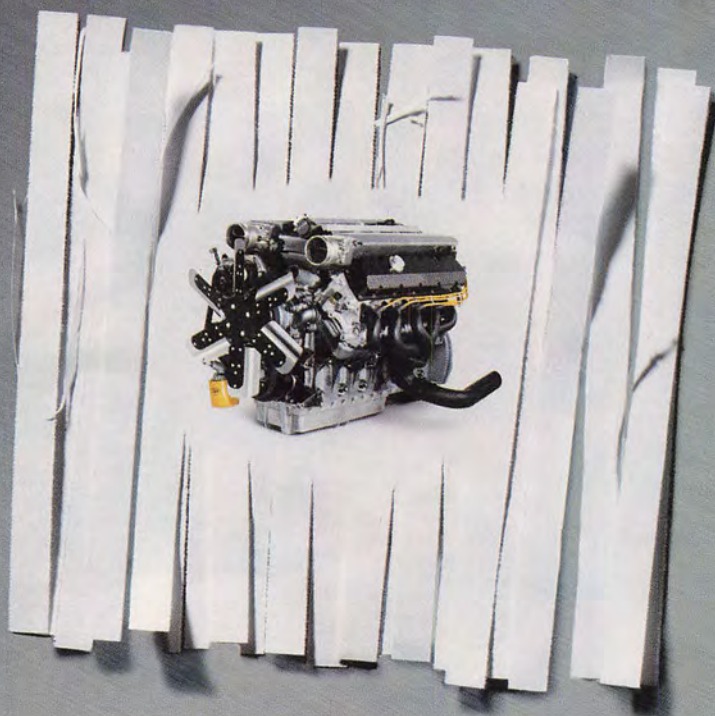
Fans expect Saban to take that place. "The brick masons are probably already getting started," says Jim Fuller, who won two national titles as an offensive lineman for Bryant and another as an assistant under Stallings. He has never seen the Alabama legions hungrier or more unified. Why else would 92,000 attend a glorified practice?

"Just so long as he knows that 91,000 of them will be kicking his ass" if things go wrong, Fuller says.

Does he really believe there are 1,000 benevolent Alabama fans? "Naw, I was being gracious."

They say college football is a matter of life and death down here, but it's not. Winning only makes life sweeter, and, once in a blue moon, losing can, too. Last winter Will Nevin and his father, Randy, who was dying of cancer, took a road trip to Shreveport, La., to see Alabama play Oklahoma State in the Independence Bowl. "He got cold, and he coughed some, and we lost," Nevin says. "It didn't matter. It was one of the best times we ever had." Randy Nevin died on March 28. At his funeral it was noted that he loved deer hunting, his family, Moundville Nazarene Church and one football team. □

A Pulitzer Prize winner and a best-selling author, Rick Bragg is a professor of writing at the University of Alabama.



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MORE

Power Structure

Will the Red Sox reclaim the top spot in John Donovan's weekly Power Rankings?

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OH, THE PAIN An aching Ortiz was a savior against the Angels, while Gagné, who blew three games in eight days, was anything but.

Blasts From the Past

Big Papi has rediscovered his power stroke, and **the Red Sox** boast baseball's best record. So why is New England dwelling on that familiar, unsettling sight in the rearview mirror?

BY TOM VERDUCCI

Photographs by John Biever

UPON THE FABLED leftfield wall at Boston's Fenway Park is a tote board that daily measures New England's collective apprehension. The board is regarded everywhere else as an enormous version of the American League East standings, at the top of which the Red Sox have stood each day since April 18. However, given the pathology of rooting for the Sox, the tally is as much a large-type reminder of how much Boston has to lose as how much it has gained.

With an achy right knee and an equally balky left shoulder, Red Sox designated hitter David Ortiz pointed to the big board last Friday morning before the start of a four-game series with the Los Angeles Angels and, without specifically mentioning They Who Must Not Be Named, said, "Those suckers are smokin' hot, and they're coming after us." Ortiz was speaking, of course, of the second-place New York Yankees. "They don't want the wild card. They want us. That's why I have to be in the lineup every day."

On May 29 the big board showed Bos-

ton up by 14½ games on New York, thereby casting Boston in a role as awkward to the Sox as Hamlet might be to Pauly Shore: prohibitive front-runner. Sure enough, with New York playing .711 ball since the All-Star break (27-11) and the lead sliced to four games with 38 to play at week's end, the Sox face a historic finish no matter what happens. Either they suffer the second-biggest collapse in baseball history (the 1914 New York Giants blew a 15-game lead on the Boston Braves) and thus



eclipse the ignominy of the 1978 Sox, who squandered a 14-game lead over New York, or they win their first division title since 1995 and their first in a full season since 1990. "First place," says Red Sox president Larry Lucchino, "would be significant to our fans and our organization. Yes, because of how we've played this year, we prefer to get in the front door as opposed to the back door."

Only in Boston could the best record (74-50) in baseball at week's end invoke anxiety. Though the Sox did win the 2004 World Series as a wild-card entrant, they have held first place on May 30 or later in each of the past eight seasons and lost the division every time to the Yankees—including 2005, when the Sox Heimlich'd what was a five-game lead on Aug. 13.

"This team is more balanced and has much better depth than that one," counters general manager Theo Epstein.

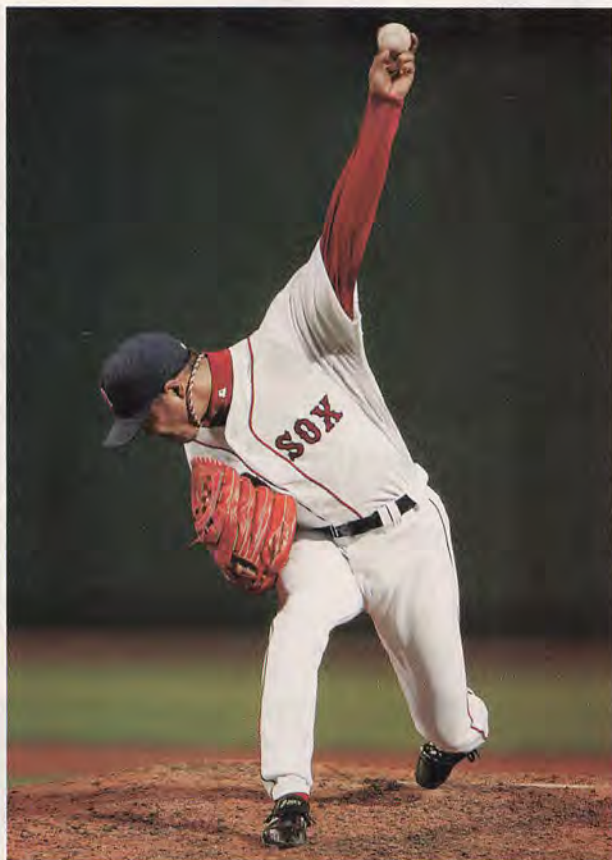
A GAINST THE Angels, the club with the majors' second-best record, Boston played as if this year's lead had staying power. Though the Sox split the four games, last Saturday night's was one of those clip-and-save victories that make for championship seasons. Boston had lost painfully the previous night, 7-5 in the latter half of a day-night doubleheader, thanks to the third blown lead in seven appearances by Eric Gagné since his acquisition from the Texas Rangers just before the July 31 trading deadline.

Rather than turning to Gagné and his poorly located 92-mph fastballs (he'd given up 14 earned runs and 25 base runners over his past 10 innings), the Sox might have been better served by calling on the fan who chucked a half-full water bottle at Gagné from the field-level stands down the left-field line after the righthanded reliever gave up three runs in the ninth. The bottle bounced over the mound in front of a stunned Gagné. (The fan was tackled by a security guard and arrested.) Gagné was booed off the mound and refused to face reporters after the game or the next day.

Gagné's teammates, however,

Even when the Sox fell behind 5-0 against Jered Weaver in the fifth inning—and knowing New York had won again that afternoon against the Detroit Tigers—they played it cool. In the bottom of the fifth the

HEAD TURNER Unheralded Okajima was on a course to finish with the lowest ERA ever in the AL by a nonclosing reliever.



have been absent for much of this season. Ortiz entered the weekend series with only 19 home runs and just one game-tying or go-ahead RBI after the sixth inning—and that was back on April 25.

"No one challenges me," Ortiz says in explanation. "I have never seen anything like this my whole career. It's the David Ortiz treatment. Pitchers tell me, 'We're not going to pitch to you and Manny [Ramirez].'" So compared to what I get, the few pitches I do see, I think I've had a pretty good season."

Last week Ortiz needed a painkilling injection for a sore left shoulder. "When I swing and miss," he says, "it really hurts. It makes me feel like I don't want to swing again." He also has been troubled most of the season by a torn meniscus in his right knee, which often prevents him from hitting from the usual crouched stance that generates much of his power. Despite these maladies, Ortiz still ranked first in the AL with a .427 on-base percentage and 10th with a .316 batting average, both of which would be career highs over a full season.

Big hits from Ortiz have become as much a civic fixture in Boston as Faneuil Hall, swan boats and even Fenway itself, so his weekend performance brought reassurance to Red Sox Nation. In addition to Saturday's grand slam, in the first inning of Friday's series opener, an 8-4 Boston victory, Ortiz ripped a

"Those suckers are smokin' hot," says Ortiz of the second-place Yankees. "They don't want the wild card. THEY WANT US."

seemed less troubled by the loss. Backup first baseman Eric Hinske, for instance, figured Saturday was a good day to ask the clubhouse barber for a Mohawk haircut. Centerfielder Coco Crisp showed up wearing a green trucker's hat, lime-green T-shirt, green belt and white sneakers with green plaid accents. "Whoever wears green today, good luck will be bestowed upon him," Crisp explained.

And where, someone wondered, had he heard such a thing?

"My psychic," he replied earnestly. "Man, look at me. I should be batting fourth."

first six batters scored, the last four on a mammoth grand slam by Ortiz. Boston went on to a 10-5 win, matching their biggest comeback of the season. (The karmic Crisp, batting eighth, provided a double in the rally and ran down eight fly balls.)

The slam reaffirmed Ortiz's importance as the touchstone of Red Sox Nation. Since arriving in Boston in 2003, Ortiz has finished fifth, fourth, second and third in AL MVP voting, largely on his power—he averaged 43 homers in those seasons—and knack for clutch hits. Those calling cards, however,

home run with a runner at second—his first Fenway homer ever with first base open and at least one runner on. And before Gagné faltered in the nightcap, Ortiz whacked a game-tying, two-run double in the eighth off Angels closer Francisco Rodriguez. For the series Ortiz knocked in eight runs. "That grand slam wasn't just the hardest ball he's hit this year," said Boston hitting coach Dave Magadan of the estimated 450-foot blast. "That was the longest ball I've ever seen hit here, including batting practice. And you saw how excited we all got from that. We look to

WINSTON TOWNSEND

him, but it's not just us. The fans, the media, everybody feeds off him and his big hits."

Says Epstein, "The foundation of this team remains pretty much the same: Get people on base in front of David and Manny so they can get pitches to hit."

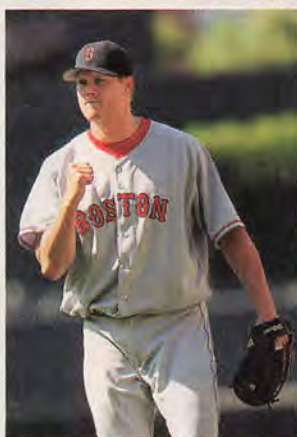
Epstein, however, has tweaked the cast around his two sluggers with an emphasis on pitching and defense. "Our run prevention has been even better than we expected," he says.

Boston is on pace to allow the fewest runs in the league for only the third time since 1921. Through Sunday, Japanese free-agent rookie pitchers Daisuke Matsuzaka (13-9, 3.79) and Hideki Okajima (3-1, 1.21) led the starters and relievers, respectively, in innings pitched. (Should Okajima maintain his ERA until season's end, it would be the eighth lowest in AL history among pitchers with at least 60 innings and the best for a nonclosing reliever.) Twenty-three-year-old Clay Buchholz, drafted with one of the two compensatory picks Boston received when ace Pedro Martinez skipped to the New York Mets after the '04 season, contributed a win last Friday with six decent innings in his big league debut and is expected to fortify the bullpen in September. And fellow rookie Dustin Pedroia, 24, who looks smaller but performs larger than his listed 5'9", has played a steady second base while hitting .324, which would be the highest batting average in history for a rookie second baseman, eclipsing the .317 mark by Jim Viox of Pittsburgh in 1913.

Since taking over as G.M. in 2003, Epstein has introduced an emphasis on advanced statistical analysis; for instance, he believes so strongly in how minor league track records project to big league performance that he expects that within a batter's first two years in the majors he will lose 10% off his OBP but add 20% to his slugging percentage. Epstein also has placed a premium on finding strong-willed players for the demanding Boston market. His drafts have produced fiery All-Star closer Jonathan Papelbon (2003), Pedroia (2004), Buchholz and outfielder Jacoby Ellsbury, the first Native American of Navajo de-

scent to make the majors (2005), as well as pitcher Justin Masterson (2006), a ground-ball specialist who may join Buchholz as a bullpen reinforcement in September.

To prep Buchholz for the spotlight in Boston, the Red Sox rearranged his pitching schedule so that he started against Roger Clemens in a nationally televised minor league game on May 23. In six innings



GOOD CATCHES Pedroia (top), Papelbon (left) and Buchholz are products of drafts built around pitching and defense.

Buchholz allowed two runs while striking out eight and walking none.

"We have to look for the right kind of guy," Epstein says, "one with a lack of fear, a high degree of self-confidence, guys who are motivated by winning and playing the game the right way, not the peripheral things that go with individual attention. And Dustin Pedroia is such a perfect example of what we're looking for, you could put him on the cover of our player-development manual. Here's a guy who gave up his [college] scholarship so that someone else could play."

IN 2002 PEDROIA, whose parents own several tire shops outside Sacramento, had finished his freshman season while on a full ride at Arizona State when he heard the program had no scholarships available for a top junior college pitcher, Ben Thurman. So Pedroia volunteered to give his scholarship money to Thurman.

"I did it because I thought he could help us get to the World Series," Pedroia says. "I told my parents just after I told the coaches. I knew they had put some money away before I got my scholarship. We lost in the super regionals, but it was definitely worth it."

Boston took Pedroia with its first pick, a second-round selection, in 2004 and sent him to Class A Augusta. "The manager [Ron Johnson] took one look at him and called up and said, 'You sent me the wrong guy,'" Epstein says. "He really thought it was a mistake. Five hours later, after he went 3 for 4 and hit a ball off the wall, he called back and said, 'We love the guy.'"

Says Ortiz of Pedroia, "Everybody loves him around here. And his defense? Incredible. I tell him it's because he's so low to the ground. A ground ball can go under his glove and it's still going to hit him in the cup."

Pedroia may be helping to give Boston a new, youthful look, but as Hinske said after Saturday's win, "We all know that when David gets hot, he can carry us for weeks, right into the postseason. We can ride his shoulders all the way."

Even with six games remaining against New York, the Red Sox have the easiest remaining schedule in the league, as measured by opponents' records. (Also, Boston is 36-22 against its last seven opponents.) The Red Sox know that Ortiz can minimize New England's ever-present apprehension if he hits as he did against the Angels.

When Ortiz returned to the dugout after his clutch double on Friday night, pitcher Curt Schilling said to him, "It's time for you to start carrying us a little bit."

"And," Schilling said a day later, "he had the swagger about him that said, O.K., I want to. And that's nice." □

Courtly Rivals

Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal are as different as two fierce foes could be, but in one thing they're identical: Neither man will take a verbal shot at the other

BY L. JON WERTHEIM

Photograph by Ella Ling/BEImages Sports

THE KID assumed he was being punk'd. After a fine freshman season as Florida's No. 1 singles player, Jesse Levine was luxuriating at home in Boca Raton last month when his cellphone chirped. An IMG agent was calling in search of a practice partner for Roger Federer, a few days removed from winning Wimbledon for the fifth straight time. Would Levine meet Federer at his training base in the United Arab Emirates? "When I realized it wasn't a joke," says Levine, "I was like, 'Yup. That works for me.'" ¶ Levine spent 10 days in Dubai hitting tennis balls with the greatest player on Earth and eating lavish meals and relaxing in a swank hotel. "It was pretty sweet," he says.

Why would Federer fly a college kid halfway around the world to train with him? While it was never explicitly stated, Levine knew damn well why. He's a lefthander and thus could simulate the play of No. 2-ranked Rafael Nadal.

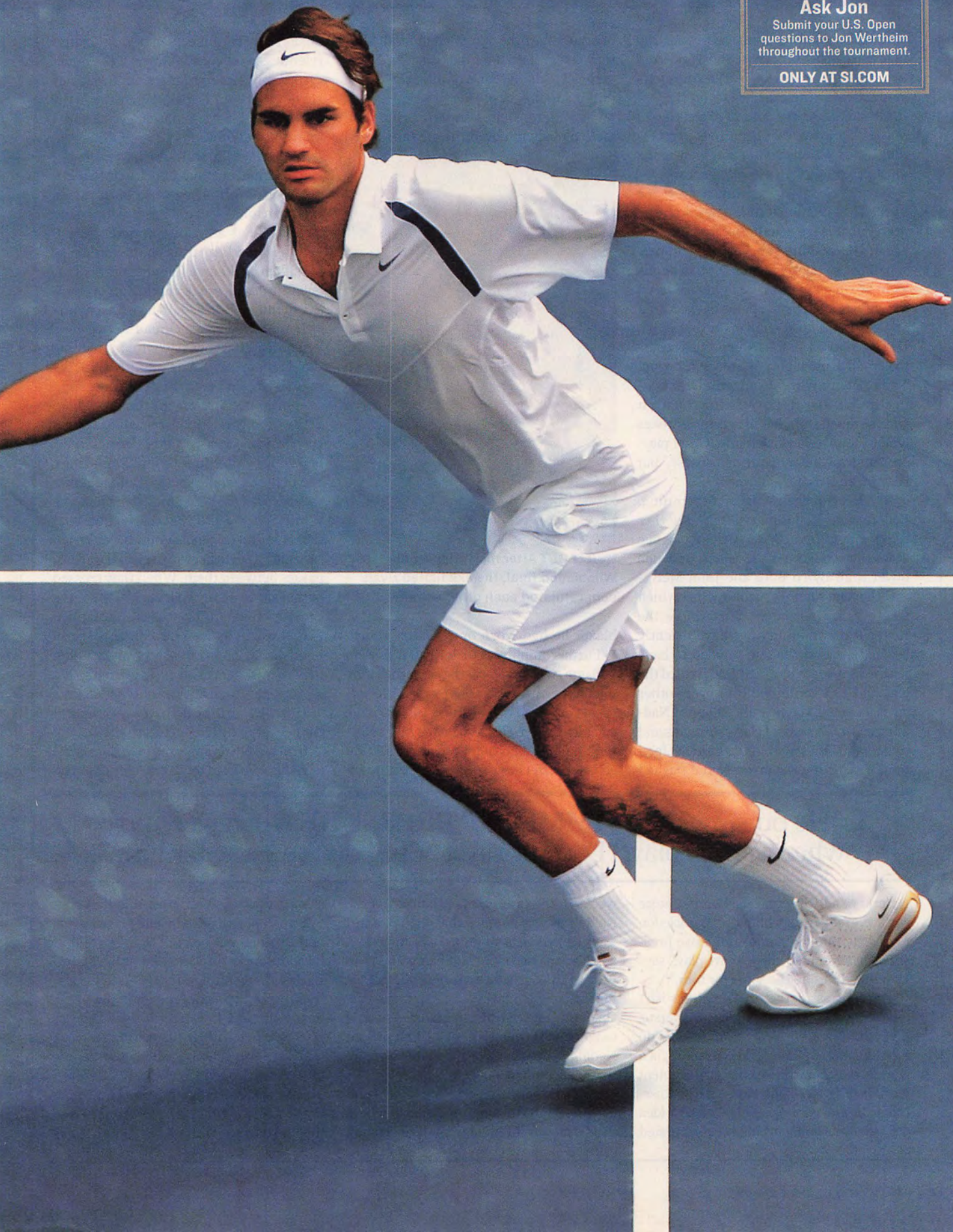
So it goes when you're embroiled in a rivalry. At the U.S. Open, which begins in New York City on Monday, Federer and Nadal will be on opposite poles of the draw. Yet if form holds—as it has at the last two Grand Slam championships—the two men will be drawn to each other like magnets and will come together on the final Sunday. Serbia's Novak Djokovic has made inroads recently, beating

RON C. ANGLE/BEIMAGES



BLUE STREAKS The last 10 Grand Slam men's singles titles have been won by either the elegant Federer (right) or the bruising Nadal.





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both Nadal and Federer at the Rogers Cup in Montreal, but otherwise the world's top two players have simply hijacked the men's game. One or the other has won the last 10 Grand Slam titles and 21 of the last 28 Masters Series tournaments. In the process they have fashioned what may well be the most gripping rivalry in all of sports.

Federer-Nadal (Roger-Rafa to everyone in the Kingdom of Tennis) meets all the prerequisites we usually set for a rivalry. There are clashing games, divergent personalities, swings in momentum. In tennis as in boxing, styles make fights. Federer, a righty, is an artist, capable of executing any shot in the book—and many that aren't. He's so smooth that he sometimes seems too proud to use mere power to win a point. Nadal, a lefty, plays violent tennis, pounding the ball and at the same time lacing it with so much spin that his ground strokes tend to bounce like kick serves. Other players uniformly refer to him as "a beast," but they mean it as a compliment.

By virtue of their consistent winning, Federer and Nadal meet often—another requirement of a thriving rivalry. Since 2004 they've faced off 13 times, only one fewer than Bjorn Borg and John McEnroe, the men's tennis rivals against which all others are measured. What's more, the Roger-Rafa dividing lines have recently blurred. At first the duo seemed to have reached a détente in which Nadal ruled the clay and Federer lorded over every other surface. But in May, Federer snapped Nadal's streak of 81 straight clay-court wins and then made him sweat in the French Open final. Returning the favor, Nadal pushed

bandanna. At the Wimbledon final, after they met at the net for the coin toss, Nadal sprinted to the baseline, recalling Pete Rose dashing to first base after drawing a walk, while Federer went over to his chair and meticulously removed the cream-colored



HUG IT OUT After their gripping five-set Wimbledon final, the exhausted rivals congratulated each other warmly.

blazer he had worn onto Centre Court.

Further amplifying their rivalry: You can pull up a stool and stay past last call debating their respective merits. The Swiss Mister has won 11 majors to Nadal's three. He's the more complete player. He has held the ATP's No. 1 ranking since early 2004 and next week will eclipse Steffi Graf's record of 186 straight

not a trace of animosity in it. Each man is relentlessly deferential toward the other, dispensing more props than a Broadway stagehand. Says Nadal, "To me he is the best player." Says Federer, "Trust me. I know how good Rafa is."

Hear them gush like this and it becomes apparent that they're not so opposite after all. They were both raised in traditional European families that regard ego as a major character defect. Federer's modesty is as characteristic as his silken backhand. (He spent part of his last Christmas break visiting an orphanage in India.) But Nadal's no prima donna either. At the French Open the two-time defending champ was spotted sweeping the clay courts when he was done practicing. "We're no better than anyone else," says his uncle and coach, Toni Nadal.

Classic rivals Chris Evert and Martina Navratilova became fast friends. Once, before they met in a Grand Slam final, one of them had her period, and together they scoured the locker room for a tampon. While Federer and Nadal aren't quite at that point yet (and not simply because neither menstruates), unmistakable warmth passes between them. When they crossed paths last week in the locker room of the Cincinnati event, they casually slapped five. It might as well have been a secret handshake. They are acutely aware that they're members of an exclusive club, that each benefits from having the other around. "He pushes me to be better," says Nadal. "I think every [athlete] needs that."

In May, Federer ventured to Nadal's home island of Mallorca to play an exhibition on

"He puts me under IMMENSE PRESSURE whenever and wherever we play," Federer says. "But I do the same for him."

Federer to a fifth set on the latter's choice surface, grass, in a spellbinding Wimbledon final. "He puts me under immense pressure whenever and wherever we play," says Federer. "But I do the same for him."

The contrast in their personalities isn't quite as stark as the fire of McEnroe versus the ice of Borg, but Federer and Nadal do have disparate personas. Federer, 26, is a worldly polyglot who just filmed a segment with the PBS talk-show host Charlie Rose. Nadal, 21, is a quintessential jock whose idea of formality is removing his sweat-saturated

weeks in the rankings penthouse. Yet the Rafaelites will counter that the Spaniard leads Federer in head-to-head meetings 8–5 and has amassed more rankings points than Federer in '07. Nadal's winning percentage in tournament finals, 82.1, is the best in the Open Era, suggesting unparalleled mental toughness. (Federer's is 75.4.) And though Nadal has fewer major titles, he has more than Federer had at age 21.

Don't, however, expect Federer or Nadal to join the discussion. And here's where their rivalry is different from most: There's

a court that was half grass and half clay. Federer noted that Nadal had played in his hometown, Basel, before. "Now," he said, "I have the opportunity to play at his place." Earlier this month, after the Rogers Cup, Nadal was unable to get a flight out to the next tour stop, in Cincinnati, so Federer invited him to ride in his private plane.

It all makes for strange times for tennis fans. Rivalries tend to cleave public opinion. Who in his right mind roots for North Carolina *and* Duke, for the Yankees *and* the Red Sox, for Hillary *and* Rudy? These

deep divisions give the matchups emotional texture. Yet in the case of Federer-Nadal, it seems entirely reasonable to cheer for both. In fact, for most of us, it feels forced to summon dislike for either.

Though recent history suggests that

Federer-Nadal XIV will take place at the U.S. Open final on Sept. 9, it's no sure thing. Federer is the three-time defending Open champ, but Nadal has never been beyond the tournament's quarterfinals and is susceptible to being outthit on hard courts—all

the more so given his recent wrist and knee injuries. Their hegemony is also being challenged by the third-ranked Djokovic. In fact, if the 20-year-old Serb keeps improving at his recent pace, we'll have this to ponder: Is there such a thing as a tri-valry? □

It's Ova-whelming

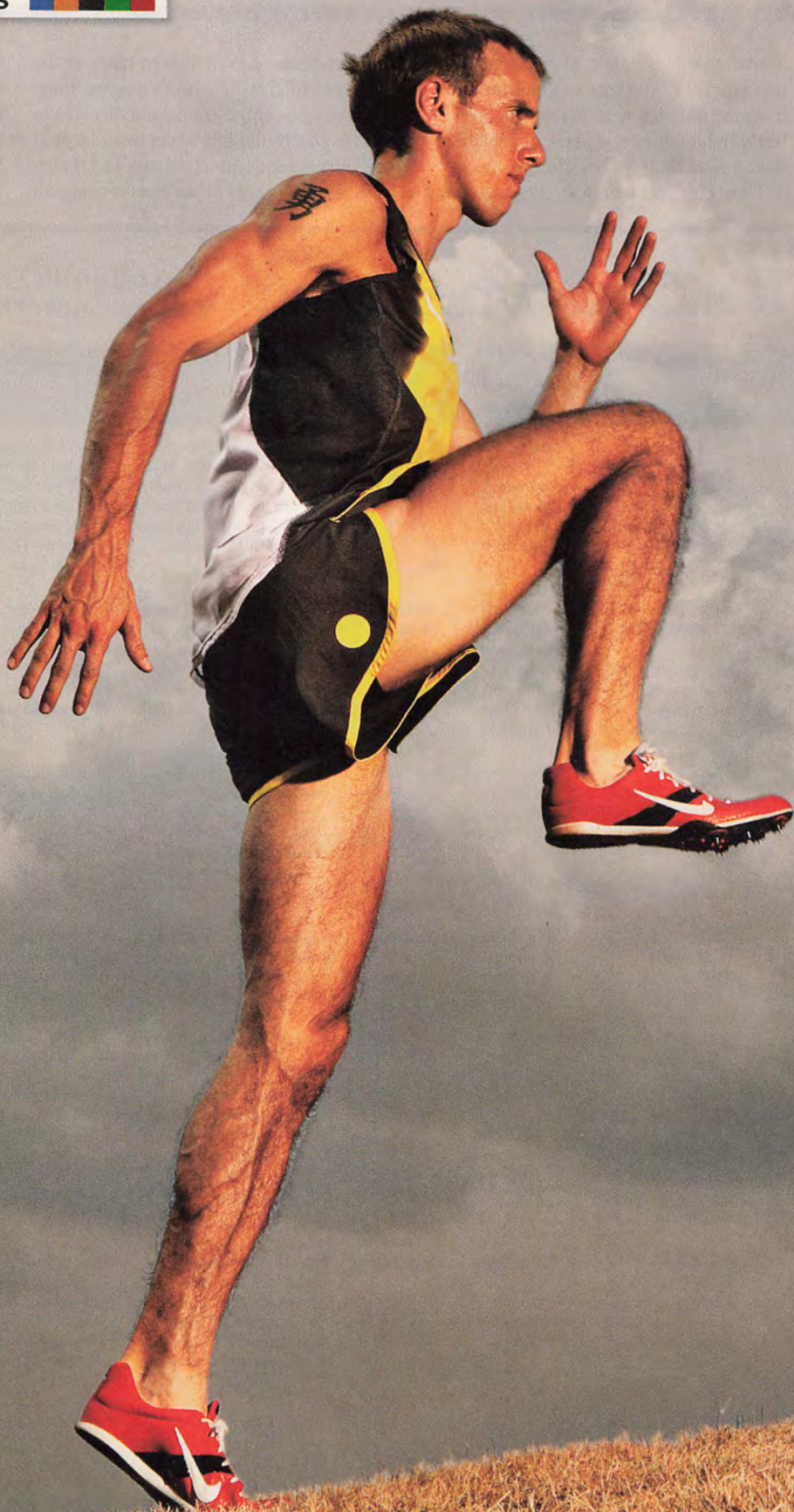
Can't tell all the Eastern Europeans apart in the women's draw? Here's help • by Richard Deitsch

	Strengths and Weaknesses	Personality Trait	Recent Telling Quote	Fashion Note	Factoid	Who Plays Her in the Movie	SI Nickname
 MARIA SHARAPOVA <i>Russia</i> AGE: 20 HT: 6' 2" RANKING: No. 2 SI ODDS: 4-1 mariasharapova.com	Murderous ground strokes; bum shoulder may blunt serve	Icy cool 	"I've got a few Range Rovers in my garage, and I don't feel I need another car. Maybe I'll send [the wheels won in San Diego this month] to Russia"	Her little black cocktail tennis dress—she called it her "night dress"—was the talk of the Open last year	Favorite dessert is French crepes with Nutella	Téa Leoni 	The Siberian Siren
 JELENA JANKOVIC <i>Serbia</i> AGE: 22 HT: 5' 9½" RANKING: No. 3 SI ODDS: 6-1 jelenajankovic.net	Muscular two-handed backhand; might be fatigued from heavy schedule	Always cheerful 	"In Serbia I cannot go out of the house without people on the street knowing who I am. I have a different look. I'm like a polar bear, because I'm a special species"	Wore an elegant long pink dress to the Wimbledon ball after winning the mixed doubles with Jamie Murray	Told <i>The New York Times</i> that her favorite TV program is <i>The Tyra Banks Show</i>	Lucy Liu 	Hammerin' Jank
 SVETLANA KUZNETSOVA <i>Russia</i> AGE: 22 HT: 5' 8½" RANKING: No. 4 SI ODDS: 12-1 No website	Athleticism, big forehand; lacks self-belief at key moments	Boundlessly outgoing 	"My head was very tired and was asking me to take them out" (when asked at Wimbledon about having removed her cornrows)	A headband and a purple or white tennis dress	Her brother, Nikolai, won a silver medal in team pursuit at the '96 Olympics. Their dad, Alexandr, is a cycling coach	Julia Stiles 	K-Net
 ANA IVANOVIC <i>Serbia</i> AGE: 19 HT: 6' 0" RANKING: No. 5 SI ODDS: 7-1 anaivanovic.com	Big serve, inside-out forehand; needs to work on movement	Winsome 	"I guess I can use this as experience. And next time I'll be in that situation, I will probably know how to deal with it better" (on losing the 2007 French Open final)	Loves photo shoots nearly as much as winning matches—her website is filled with modeling poses	Superstitions include not walking on the lines on the court	Milla Jovovich 	NirvAna
 NADIA PETROVA <i>Russia</i> AGE: 25 HT: 5' 10" RANKING: No. 8 SI ODDS: 15-1 nadia-petrova.ru	Hard serve, great hands; gets down on herself	Steadfast 	"I can't say I'm a great player, because it takes winning a Grand Slam in my eyes"	Favors traditional white dresses and a white visor	Her mother, Nadezhda Ilyina, won a bronze medal at the '76 Olympics in the 4 x 400-meter relay	Michelle Williams 	Game Ova
 DANIELA HANTUCHOVA <i>Slovakia</i> AGE: 24 HT: 5' 11" RANKING: No. 10 SI ODDS: 25-1 dhantuchova.com	Fluid, clean ground strokes; mentally shaky	Detached 	"Now I know much, much more how to deal with any kind of situation that comes my way. I understand that... it's O.K. sometimes to have a bad day"	One of the most downloaded players on the Internet; her 44-inch legs are the longest on tour	Avid golfer; her favorite club is a nine-iron, with which she scored a hole in one in Perth, Australia, in 2003	Mischa Barton 	Leg-O
 NICOLA PIETRANGELI <i>Czech Republic</i> AGE: 18 HT: 6' 0" RANKING: No. 14 SI ODDS: 18-1 vaidisova-nicole.com	Big serve, ground strokes; hasn't played since Wimbledon	Ambitious 	"Yeah, I'm definitely influenced by America but still keeping my one Czech mind"	At the Open she plans to wear an aquamarine dress for day matches and a shimmering black-and-gold dress at night	Held her 18th birthday party at Stereo nightclub in New York City	Amanda Bynes 	The Bouncing Czech

FROM TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT: JESSICA KLUETMEIER; MICHAEL CAULFIELD/WIREIMAGE.COM; ALBERTO E. RODRIGUEZ/GETTY IMAGES; JOHN CORDS/ICON SM; PIERRE VERDY/AF/GETTY IMAGES; JESSE GRANT/WIREIMAGE.COM; VINCENT CURUTCHET/DPPI/ICON SM; JAMIE SQUIRE/GETTY IMAGES; PETER KRAMER/GETTY IMAGES; HEINZ KLUETMEIER; PIERRE VERDY/AF/GETTY IMAGES; MICHAEL TRAN/FILMMAGIC; DARRYL DENNIS/ICON SM; PAUL HARDING/REUTERS; RABBANI AND SOLIMENE PHOTOGRAPHY/WIREIMAGE.COM; STEPHEN DUNN/GETTY IMAGES; KRISTIAN DOWLING/GETTY IMAGES; ANDREAS RENTZ/GETTY IMAGES; JULIAN FINNEY/GETTY IMAGES; MIKE STOB/GETTY IMAGES; JEMAL COUNTESS/WIREIMAGE.COM

AHEAD OF THE PACK

Webb built up so much aerobic strength over the last three years that he has had a breakthrough 2007 despite scaling back his workouts.



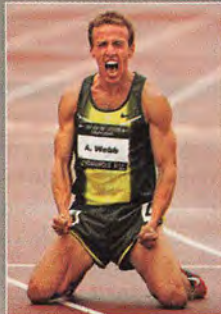
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Daily reports from Tim Layden at the world track and field championships in Japan.

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Just the Beginning



Former high school phenom Alan Webb could cap his best year yet with a gold medal in the 1,500 at the worlds. But the longer road leads to Beijing—and beyond

BY TIM LAYDEN *Photograph by Simon Bruty*

ON A SUNDAY AFTERNOON in the spring of 2001, Alan Webb ran a mile faster than any other U.S. high school runner in history. More than 11,000 spectators rose in a frenzy to cheer the epic performance at Oregon's Hayward Field, and many more embraced it from afar. Webb clocked 3:53.43 that day, nearly two seconds faster than Jim Ryun had run 36 years earlier. World-record holder and race winner Hicham El Guerrouj of Morocco invited Webb to share his victory lap. David Letterman invited him to share his stage. ♪ An impatient U.S. track community beseeched Webb to put the sport on his 18-year-old back.

"When you run 3:53 and convincingly break a record that was held by an icon like Jim Ryun," says Bob Kennedy, a two-time Olympian and the U.S.-record holder in the 5,000 meters, "people, especially outside the sport, are going to expect nothing less than an Olympic gold medal. That's America."

Or, as Webb's father, Steve, an economist for the World Bank, puts it in the language of his profession, "Many people became distracted by linear

extrapolations, based on that race."

Six years have passed. Webb has spent much of that time in a maelstrom of rushed expectation and blind criticism, fueled by the explosion of Internet message boards and the country's fascination with precocity. No other distance runner has been more scrutinized. Predictably, Webb has emerged wiser and tougher—and

also, at 24, as one of the best middle-distance runners in the world.

At the world track and field championships, which begin Saturday in Osaka, Japan, Webb is among the favorites in the 1,500 meters. "Alan has had a lot of pressure on him, but he has incredible talent," says Bernard Lagat, the Kenyan-born 2004 Olympic silver medalist in the 1,500 meters, who is now a U.S. citizen. "He has put things together at the right time."

Webb has already had a summer for the ages. He won his third U.S. 1,500-meter title on June 24 in Indianapolis. Twelve days later, at a race in Paris, he ran a personal best of 3:30.54 in the 1,500 (the world's fastest time this year) for his first-ever Golden League victory. Two weeks after that, on a

JEFF MANN/AP/GETTY IMAGES

quiet, tree-shrouded track in Belgium, Webb ran a 3:46.91 mile, shattering Steve Scott's quarter-century-old U.S. record of 3:47.69. And on July 28 Webb ripped off a personal best of 1:43.84 in the 800 meters, the second-fastest time in the world this year, to win another race in Belgium.

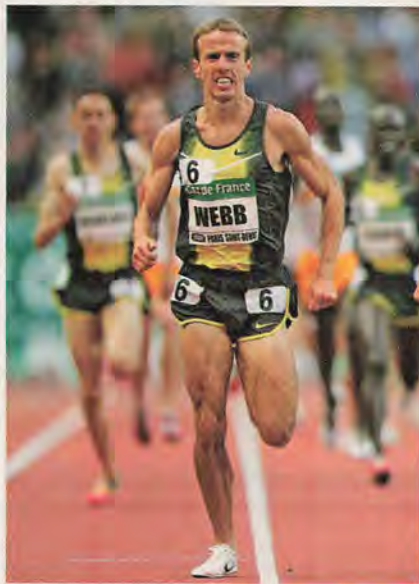
On a sweltering night early in August, during a two-week break from the track circuit, Webb sits in a restaurant near his Reston, Va., home, eating pizza with chicken and spinach. He has long since moved past his 3:53 and is chasing fresh goals. "I'm proud of the way I ran in high school," he says. "I worked hard for that day. It was special, and I can never exactly reproduce that. But I've done some pretty cool things since then. Winning championship medals is a goal. The Olympics are a big goal. But I don't want to get too caught up in doing that one thing on that one day, because the 1,500 is a really tough race. There are other things I can do. That's why this summer has been awesome. And it's taken six years to get here."

Not by the usual route, either. After his high school career Webb spent a year at Michigan. He ran well, winning the Big Ten title in the 1,500 as a freshman. But in the summer of 2002 he abruptly left Ann Arbor, reunited with his high school coach, Scott Raczkowski, and signed a seven-figure contract with Nike that runs through the 2008 Olympics.

"I wasn't willing to settle," Webb explains. "I liked a lot of things about Michigan, but staying there would have been settling. People told me, 'You can do well there.' I knew that. But I wanted to do more than win the Big Ten or win the

way you can ever run as fast as the best milers in the world is to run a certain level of very hard workouts. The only way to do that is to build tremendous [aerobic] strength. So let's spend the next three years—2004, '05, '06—doing that."

The plan has worked spectacularly,



PARIS MATCHLESS Webb blazed to the fastest time in the world this year in this 1,500-meter race in the French capital.

though not without hiccups. In 2004 Webb dominated the 1,500 at the U.S. Olympic Trials with a killing mid-race burst, but in Athens he failed to advance out of the heats. A year later he won another U.S. title in the 1,500 and reached the world championship final in Helsinki—but finished ninth. Before

reduced Webb's intense track sessions from a total of 10,000 meters per workout to fewer than 8,000 meters. "Just that little bit of difference, and it's playtime," says Webb. "You can really hammer."

Chris Lukezic, a world-class miler who sometimes trains with Webb, recalls a June workout on the track at George Mason. "It was me and Alan and [Canadian Olympian] Kevin Sullivan. We were doing 800s. We started out pretty easy, like a two-minute pace, and it went down pretty impressively from there. I dropped out after seven. Kevin dropped out after eight. Alan did nine. The last couple, man, *fast*." At the end Webb had dipped into the low 1:50s.

Still, Osaka offers no guarantees. There will be plenty of talent in the field, including Lagat, Mehdi Baala of France and 2005 world champion Rashid Ramzi of Bahrain. The 1,500 is a strategic riddle, and races are often won by the luckiest, not the swiftest. If a runner moves too soon or gets boxed in, often his race is over. "To win any medal at all," says Kennedy, "you have to be tactically almost perfect."

In Webb's favor: Throughout 2007 he has been exceptionally fast at the end of races, a tribute to his strength and a hedge against surprises in each race. "One thing I've learned," says Webb, "is to run all the way through the race. If something happens, don't get shook. Just keep running."

Osaka is a major event, of course, but ultimately it is only a small step for Webb. Beijing follows in a year, and Webb and Raczkowski's planning takes them far beyond that, to 2012 and even '16. Even so, the runner's legacy already is firmly entrenched.

"Alan has had a lot of pressure on him, but he has INCREDIBLE TALENT," says Lagat. "He has put things together at the right time."

NCAA. My goal was to be one of the best runners in the world."

He struggled through the 2003 season, adjusting to the pressures of running for a shoe company's money and living on his own. ("Here I am, buying a sofa when I should be training," recalls Webb.) A mid-summer bout of appendicitis also helped stunt the season. All of which led Raczkowski and Webb to make a long-term plan.

"We had both been caught up in trying to run fast immediately," says Raczkowski, who began coaching Webb in 1998. "The only

the summer ended, he ran 5,000 meters in 13:10.86, making him the fourth-fastest U.S. runner ever at that distance.

In April 2006 Webb stunned the U.S. track world by winning a 10,000-meter race in 27:34.72, the best debut ever by an American at that distance. His impressive range, from 800 to 10,000 meters, makes him one of the most versatile runners in history.

A hamstring injury and an episode of anemia cut short Webb's 2006 summer season, but that simply postponed the inevitable. For the '07 season Raczkowski

"I was a junior in high school when Alan ran 3:53," says Lukezic. "That one performance was a paradigm shift for young U.S. runners. Alan changed everyone's mind-set about what was really fast. And over the next 10 years you'll see the effect."

An hour after winning the national title two months ago, Webb pulled a dry shirt over his head and stepped onto the puddled track for a warmdown run. First one high school runner followed, then another. And then another, chasing Webb around the oval, catching a scent of the dream. □

MICHAEL STEELE/GETTY IMAGES

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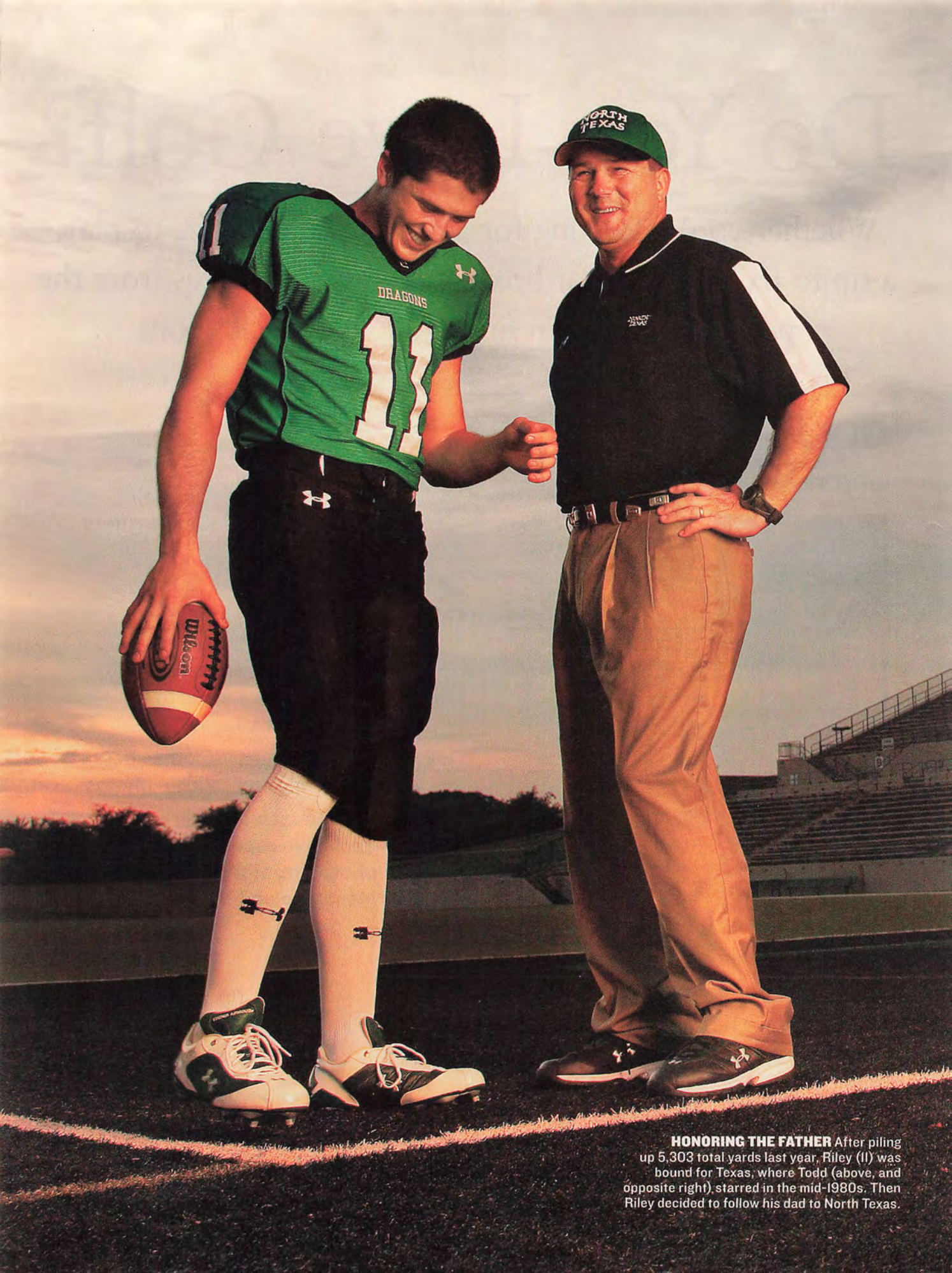
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HONORING THE FATHER After piling up 5,303 total yards last year, Riley (II) was bound for Texas, where Todd (above, and opposite right), starred in the mid-1980s. Then Riley decided to follow his dad to North Texas.

The Son Also Shines



Todd Dodge left Southlake Carroll with a 48-game win streak, but his boy **Riley**, the quarterback who led the team to its third straight Texas 5A title last year, is entrusted with keeping the dynasty alive

BY KELLI ANDERSON

Photograph by Darren Carroll

SOMEDAY RILEY DODGE would like to be known as the first quarterback to lead Southlake Carroll High to back-to-back Texas 5A Division I football titles. Someday he'd like to be known for helping his dad, Todd, the former Carroll coach, build a winning tradition at the University of North Texas. Someday Riley Dodge would like to be known for something other than what he's famous for now—projectile vomiting through his face mask immediately before (and moments after) throwing the go-ahead touchdown pass in the fourth quarter of the state championship victory against Austin Westlake last December.

Never mind that his stomach was roiling from a combination of the flu and an evening of scrambling in the backfield, or that he was bothered by a sprained ankle and bruised ribs inflicted earlier in the playoffs. Dodge had the added pressure of keeping Carroll's 47-game winning streak alive and giving Todd, who had built that streak and was moving on to his first college head coaching job, a proper send-off.

Nobody seems to remember those heroic

elements. This was apparent last winter when Riley and his family, in an Oval Office visit arranged by a family friend who

works in the White House, were greeted by President Bush, who said, "So, you must be the guy who threw up!"

Fortunately for Riley he will have more opportunities to make a lasting impression on his fellow Texans. With the onset of his senior season at Carroll, his second as a starter, the suburban Dallas program that has won three straight 5A titles and is SI's preseason No. 1 team in the nation (box, page 76), Riley will try to prolong the Dragons' dominance and top his own outstanding performance last year: 4,184 yards and 54 touchdowns passing, plus 1,119 yards and 13 scores rushing, in a no-huddle spread offense.

Then, in January, instead of heading to the University of Texas—Todd's alma mater and the school whose scholarship offer Riley verbally accepted last February—

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Riley will move 23 miles north to Denton to start classes at North Texas and resume playing for his dad. Todd, who accepted the Mean Green's job offer in December, takes over a team that has won only five of its last 24 games and in 2006 ranked 117th in the country in both passing and total offense. "I think I can help him," says the soft-spoken Riley.

So now, rather than playing in front of 85,000 at Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium, Riley will be playing for a team that drew an average crowd of 16,000 last season. "North Texas is going to be a challenge," says Riley, "but I am excited about the possibilities."

Giving up a chance to play for the Longhorns, he says, "was the hardest decision of my life." Riley was taken to his first Texas game as a three-week-old and for most of his life has had his bedroom walls painted burnt orange. But a week after making his nonbinding commitment, he started having second thoughts. If he were in Austin, Riley realized, his dad wouldn't get to see him play, and his mom, Elizabeth, and his 14-year-old sister, Molly, would have to choose between watching his team or his dad's. It would be the same for his 68-year-old grandfather, Ebbie Neptune, a coach and administrator at Austin Westlake from 1982 through 2003, who suffered a massive stroke last January and had relocated from Austin to the Dallas area.

Finally, Riley felt he had a better shot at playing quarterback at North Texas, a member of the Sun Belt Conference. "I know some people doubt me because of my height," says Riley, who at 6 feet, 187 pounds, is rated the 58th-best prospect in Texas by rivals.com. "But I can play at the Division I level. And I've been playing my dad's offense since I was in sixth grade. I know it like the back of my hand."

DODGE BALL, as the offense is known in Southlake and Denton, has its roots at Thomas Jefferson High, in Port Arthur, Texas, where Todd, a Methodist preacher's son, played quarterback from 1978 through '80. Under coach Ronnie Thompson, Todd threw the ball about 30 to 35 times a game, which was unheard of at the time in Texas, and became the first quarterback in the state to pass for more than 3,000 yards in a season. After a stellar career at Texas—his passing totals of 2,791 yards and 18 touchdowns rank ninth and 10th, respectively,

in school history—Todd caught up with Thompson again in the late '80s, when Thompson was the offensive coordinator at South Garland High and Todd held the same position at nearby McKinney High. "Ronnie had put together a little package that included some Port Arthur, a little old University of Houston run-and-shoot and a little of Dennis Erickson's Miami Hurricanes pro-style one-back offense," says Todd, who drew on Thompson's expertise. "At McKinney we replaced the I [formation]



"Kids say, 'He's only playing because he's the coach's son,' " says Todd. "Riley played through TOUGH STUFF last year."

with the spread, and we really lit it up. I've used four receivers out of the shotgun ever since."

After several more stops—including a stint as the offensive coordinator at North Texas in 1992 and '93—Todd landed at Carroll in 2000 with a 24–35 high school coaching record. The program had won three 3A titles with coach Bob Ledbetter's run-oriented offense but stagnated after Ledbetter retired following the '95 season. Using the spread,

Todd's teams went a combined 19–10 in 4A in his first two years. Since the Dragons moved up to 5A in 2002, they have been nearly unstoppable: four state titles, a 79–1 record (the Dragons lost by one point to Katy High in the 2003 5A Division II title game) and the 48-game winning streak, which is two short of breaking the Texas big-school record.

THE PROGRAM'S success stems from a perfect storm of good coaching, highly motivated players and an affluent community's commitment to a football development system. Every football team in Southlake, from pee-wee to high school, wears green-and-white jerseys with the trademarked Dragons logo. Thanks to coaching clinics that Dodge started when he arrived, players learn the proper way to throw, catch and tackle beginning at the age of six. In middle school they are taught Dodge's spread offense and 4–3 defense.

Walk into any of the five Southlake elementary schools on a Carroll game day, and the faculty and students are wearing green, and the walls are adorned with GO DRAGONS! signs. "It makes your arms tingle," says new Carroll coach Hal Wasson, who was an assistant under Dodge in 2001 and '02. "The idea that 'I want to be a Dragon' is embedded in these kids from the time they are in grammar school."

If their parents were lucky enough to snag Carroll season tickets—which cost \$75 on top of the \$50 required for the right to buy the tickets—those same kids will be flocking to the \$15.3 million, 11,000-seat Dragon Stadium, a six-year-old facility. Because the stadium is four miles off-campus, the team uses a \$6 million on-campus indoor practice facility that's so state-of-the-art, the Dallas Cowboys borrowed it a few times in 2001.

Riley and Todd still occasionally use the facility to play catch, something they've done since Riley was 12 years old and Todd started teaching him the footwork and throwing motion that served him so well in his own youth. "If you looked at a tape of him throwing at Texas and watched me at Carroll, we're very similar," says Riley.

A few weeks ago they were playing catch while Dragons senior receiver Blake Cantu watched from the sideline. When Cantu spotted a sports drink on a nearby stool, he went to reach for the bottle—but before he could get his hand around it, Dodge père threw a perfect

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spiral from 40 yards that knocked the bottle off the stool. "Blake just looked at him and said, 'Oh. My. God,'" says Riley with pride.

B EING THE coach's son wasn't always fun, of course. Though Riley grew up serving as a ball boy for

his father's teams, Todd had never coached him until spring practice of his freshman year at Carroll. It took Todd a while to get the hang of it. When Riley didn't perform to his father's expectations, Todd lit into him to the point where Riley's teammates started to defend him. "I was being really

unfair to him," says Todd. "It was a typical parent thing; you get way too involved in their successes and failures, you take it too personally." A good coaching friend gave him a piece of advice. "He told me, 'When you are a coach and a dad, you are the two most important people in that child's life.

SI's Top 10

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1. CARROLL (Southlake, Texas) 2006 RECORD: 16-0

TOP PLAYERS: QB Riley Dodge (6 feet, 187, Sr.); RB Tre' Newton (6 feet, 194, Sr.); LB Derek Tomlin (6 feet, 200, Sr.)

OUTLOOK: With eight of 11 starters returning on offense, including Dodge (4,184 passing yards and 54 TDs in 2006) and Newton (2,010 rushing yards), the Dragons are favored to win a fourth straight Texas 5A title. Though the D has only three starters back, the players are athletic and know the system. **BIG GAME:** Sept. 15 vs. Northwestern (Miami)



6. INDEPENDENCE (Charlotte) 2006 RECORD: 16-0

TOP PLAYERS: WR Javon Rembert (5' 8", 182, Sr.); RB Rod Chisholm (5' 9", 192, Sr.); FS Devonte Holloman (6' 2", 205, Jr.)

OUTLOOK: Winners of 108 straight games and seven North Carolina 4A titles in a row, the Patriots will retool in a hurry. Chisholm, a transfer, will carry the load on offense, especially after tight end Mario Carter (6' 4", 225) dislocated and tore ligaments in his right knee and will be lost for the season. **BIG GAME:** Nov. 2 vs. Butler (Charlotte)



7. KATY (Texas) 2006 RECORD: 13-1

TOP PLAYERS: QB Bo Levi Mitchell (6 feet, 175, Sr.); RB Audre Dean (6' 1", 210, Sr.); LB Eric Ball (6' 3", 265, Sr.)

OUTLOOK: After a disappointing 28-21 loss to Cypress Falls (Houston) in the 5A Division II quarters last year, the Tigers have 12 starters returning. Leading the offense will be Mitchell (1,490 passing yards, 13 TDs) and UCLA-bound Dean, who rushed for 2,111 yards out of the I formation last season. **BIG GAME:** Sept. 8 vs. The Woodlands (Texas)



8. NORTHSIDE (Warner Robbins, Ga.) 2006 RECORD: 15-0

TOP PLAYERS: QB Marques Ivory (6' 2", 240, Sr.); WR Nick Bass (5' 11", 195, Sr.); RB Tjuan Green (5' 11", 190, Sr.)

OUTLOOK: The Eagles look to repeat as Georgia AAAA champions after winning their first title in school history. Ivory, the division's offensive player of the year, threw for 1,823 yards and 27 TDs. The double-threat offense also features Green, who rushed for 945 yards in five playoff games. **BIG GAME:** Sept. 14 vs. North Clayton (College Park, Ga.)



4. DEMATHA (Hyattsville, Md.) 2006 RECORD: 12-0

TOP PLAYERS: WR Kenny Tate (6' 4", 220, Sr.); WR Rodney McLeod (5' 10", 185, Sr.); DE Nick Rivers (6' 3", 245, Sr.)

OUTLOOK: To win a fifth straight WCAC championship, the Stags' offense will rely upon two big-play receivers. While Tate garnered most of the attention with 34 receptions for 609 yards and eight TDs last season, the Virginia-bound McLeod also established himself as a deep threat with 24 receptions and 361 yards. **BIG GAME:** Sept. 2 at St. Xavier



5. SOUTH PANOLA (Batesville, Miss.) 2006 RECORD: 15-0

TOP PLAYERS: FS-RB Darius Barksdale (6 feet, 190, Sr.); C Jonathan Wilson (6' 2", 275, Sr.)

OUTLOOK: The Tigers, who enter the season with 14 returning starters (including the entire offensive and defensive lines), are trying to extend 60 consecutive wins and four straight Mississippi 5A titles. To keep those streaks alive, Barksdale, an Ole Miss recruit, must surpass his 1,042 rushing yards in '06. **BIG GAME:** Sept. 7 vs. Clarksdale (Miss.)



9. POLY (Long Beach, Calif.) 2006 RECORD: 11-2

TOP PLAYERS: QB Morgan Fennell (6 feet, 183, Jr.); S Vaughn Telemaque (6' 2", 190, Sr.)

OUTLOOK: Fennell, who was 14 of 35 for 203 yards last season, makes the passing game more consistent in a Jackrabbits offense known for its athleticism. The D features one of the most talented secondaries in the nation, led by Telemaque, who had 54 tackles, 11 deflections and two interceptions. **BIG GAME:** Sept. 1 at Glenville (Cleveland)



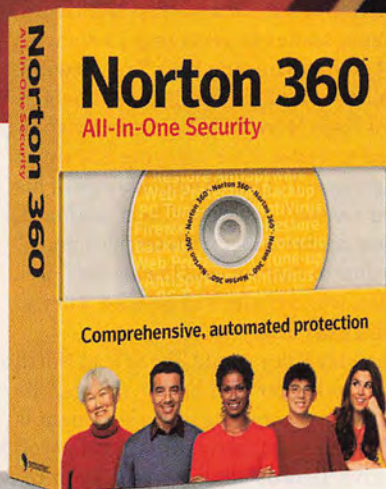
10. JENKS (Oklahoma) 2006 RECORD: 13-1

TOP PLAYERS: RB Chris Adkins (5' 9", 185, Sr.); QB Mark Ginther (6' 1", 190, Sr.); DT Tony Gillespie (6 feet, 295, Sr.)

OUTLOOK: The Trojans won the Oklahoma 6A title, but a repeat will be difficult with the top-two linebackers gone from last year's team. It helps that the team has a high-powered offense featuring Ginther (2,140 passing yards, 27 TDs) and Adkins (695 rushing yards in four playoff games). **BIG GAME:** Sept. 7 at Union (Tulsa) —Kevin Armstrong



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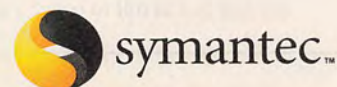
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5 Players To Watch

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TERRELLE PRYOR

JEANNETTE (Pennsylvania) QB, 6' 6", 220, SENIOR

No player will be watched with more anticipation than Pryor (*top right*), the No. 1 prospect in the nation. Deemed by scouts to be the next Vince Young, he threw for 1,732 yards and 15 touchdowns, ran for 1,676 yards and 28 scores—and caught a TD pass—in 2006. A first-team all-state forward as well, he is ranked by *Rise Magazine* as a top-50 hoops recruit in the class of '08, and he hopes to play both sports in college. Considering: Ohio State, Penn State, USC, West Virginia.



DARRELL SCOTT

ST. BONAVENTURE (Ventura, Calif.) RB, 6' 1", 205, SENIOR

At Moorpark (Calif.) High last season—he transferred to nearby St. Bonaventure in January—Scott (*bottom right*) ran for 3,194 yards and 46 touchdowns on 337 carries (that's 9.5 yards per rush). Thanks mostly to his 4.4 speed, he topped 200 rushing yards in 11 games and 300 once. Short list: Florida, Florida State, LSU.



JULIO JONES

FOLEY (Alabama) WR, 6' 4", 215, SENIOR

Rated the No. 1 senior at his position by *Rise*, he has drawn comparisons with Detroit Lions rookie Calvin

Johnson with his blend of speed, athleticism and strength. (He benches 345 pounds, squats 505.) Last season Jones had 75 catches for 1,306 yards and 16 touchdowns en route to all-state honors. Mulling: Alabama, Auburn, Florida, Arkansas, Florida State.

WILL HILL

ST. PETER'S PREP (Jersey City) QB-KR-DB, 6' 3", 203, SENIOR

A busy man in 2006: 11 touchdowns passing, 11 touchdowns rushing, four punts and two kickoffs returned for scores, plus 61 tackles, three interceptions and two sacks. After leading the Marauders to the state Group 4 championship game against Don Bosco Prep (Ramsey, N.J.), he was named New Jersey offensive player of the year by the *The Star-Ledger* of Newark. First choice: Florida.

BRYCE BROWN

EAST (Wichita, Kans.) RB, 6 FEET, 215, JUNIOR

Scouts are calling him Kansas' most dangerous high school back since Barry Sanders. Brown, who can cut on a dime despite his large frame, rushed for 2,039 yards and 27 touchdowns last season, after racking up 1,472 and 12 as a freshman.

—Jon Mahoney

Don't rob him of either one of them," Todd recalls. "I started treating him differently. I started treating him fairly."

The last two years were "very smooth and a lot of fun," says Riley. "When we are on the field, we turn the light switch on to coach; when we are off the field, we turn it off."

Todd says he now has a great friendship with and an enormous respect for his son. "To play quarterback at Southlake Carroll is very high pressure; the town has a lot of expectations," Todd says. "Prior to the 2006 season, the past four 5A players of the year had all been Carroll quarterbacks. They had all led their teams to a state championship. Now here comes the coach's kid. Coaches' kids always hear, 'Oh, he's only playing because he's the coach's son.' He played through a lot of tough stuff last year."

This year Riley will face new challenges, the most obvious being calling signals for a coach other than his father. Wasson was a high school head coach for 16 years before moving to Carroll to coach running backs

during the 2001 and '02 seasons, when his own son, Chase, was a running back and receiver, then the quarterback. He then became head coach at nearby Fossil Ridge, where he installed a version of Todd's offense. "I think it might have been hard [for me] had the new coach been anyone but him," says Riley. "Coach Wasson knows the system, and he isn't changing anything. We'll have the exact same plays, the same signals. He has said, 'If it's not broke, don't fix it.'"

That includes the Dragons' motto, Protect the Tradition, which can be found on everything from the T-shirts the players wear under their jerseys to beverage mugs sold in the stadium gift shop. "We want to adapt to the tradition and things that have been done here," says Wasson, who brought three new assistants to the Carroll staff. "The main thing I've told the coaches that I've brought in is, These kids are going to bring their A game every day, and as a coach you better bring your A game. [The players'] expectations are high, the

community's expectations are high."

Wasson says he does not find those expectations overwhelming, "because I know it's not about me. I sleep every night, and I don't wake up in a sweat, because I know I am just a very small part of this."

Among the other small parts critical to Carroll's continued success are Cantu, the team leader in receiving yards with 1,283; senior running back Tre' Newton, the older son of former Dallas Cowboys guard Nate Newton (Tre' verbally committed to Texas after carrying 274 times for 2,010 yards and 20 touchdowns in his junior season); wideout Chris Brainard, "a great route runner with terrific hands," according to Wasson; and linebacker Derek Tomlin, who says he will go with Riley to North Texas next year.

Someday Riley would like to lead North Texas "to bigger and better things," he says. In the meantime his assignment is twofold: protect the tradition at Carroll and give Texans something new to remember him by.

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Two Years After Katrina

Sports played a special role in the early stages of the **New Orleans** recovery, but beyond the Superdome, in battered, depopulated areas such as the Lower Ninth Ward, there is a great need to get the city's at-risk youth back in play

BY ALEXANDER WOLFF

SPECIAL REPORTING BY CAITLIN MOSCATELLO

Photographs by Lynn Johnson

ABANDONED The basketball blacktop at Alfred Lawless High, engulfed by a massive wave from a breached levee on Aug. 29, 2005, remains in ruins.

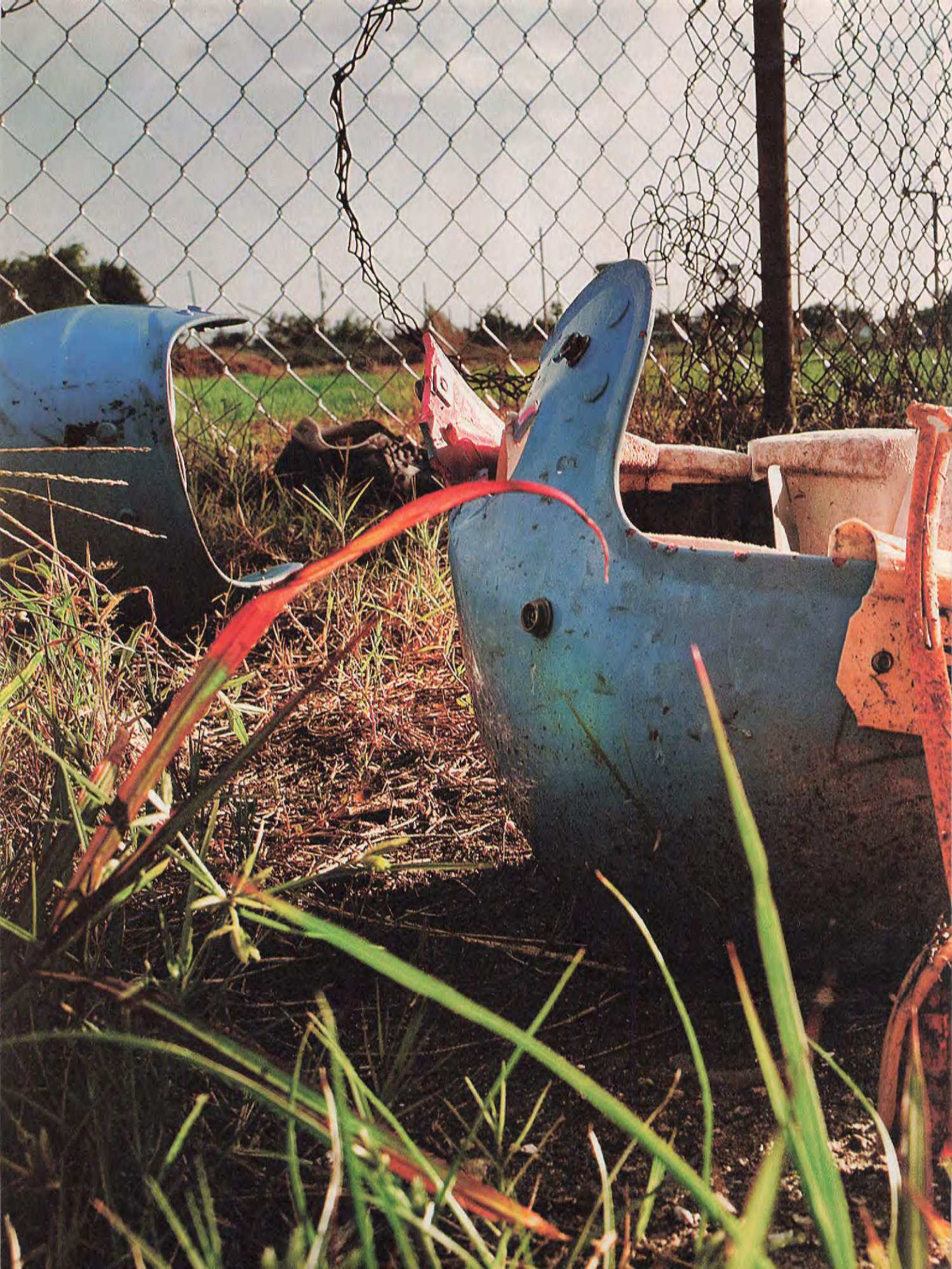


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Firsthand impressions from
Alexander Wolff's trip to New
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AFTER KATRINA

YOU IN?" It's the query posed to anyone who would be in the game, an exhortation rich with resolve and checked guts. It's essentially what New Orleanians with a rebuilders' heart have been asking one another for most of the two years since the greatest natural disaster in U.S. history sent 40 billion gallons of water into their city, rinse-cycled homes and lives, and withdrew to lay bare its work. ¶ You in? If you are, you inhabit a city transformed. Sports after

Hurricane Katrina is a world in which New Orleans Saints stage clinics in FEMA trailer parks, and New Orleans Hornets raise drywall, and high school coaches block out plays in cafeterias for want of football fields—while the foundation begun by late NFL star Reggie White paradoxically offers the public service of house demolition.

It's a world in which baseball diamonds are hard to come by, but the spray-painted hieroglyphics of search-and-rescue teams still adorn the facades of houses, like notations on baseball scorecards, indicating the number of dead bodies found inside.

It's a world in which insurance companies suddenly seem to underwrite every sporting event in town—and homeowners fume, believing that Allstate (sponsor of the Sugar Bowl, this season's BCS championship game, and holder of a Patron Saint stake in the local NFL franchise) and State Farm (with the Bayou Classic and the Louisiana high school football championships) are trying to deflect attention from the meager settlements and trebled premiums that keep even those who want to rebuild from coming home to do so.

It's a world in which the NCAA is exposed as actually having a heart, for the Inspector Javerts of Indianapolis have suspended some of their rules—on extra benefits for athletes and on standards to qualify for Division I status—at Tulane and the University of New Orleans.

It's a world in which the Saints sell every season ticket and corporate suite, as citizens and businesses still in town try to make sure that Katrina won't become a pretext for the team's long-feared departure.

It's a world in which Alfred Lawless High, once the pride of the Lower Ninth Ward, stands like Pompeii Tech, neither razed nor rebuilt, just suspended in time by the lava flow of the floodwater. What became of the boy who wore helmet number 34, which as of a month ago still sat in locker 827? And that girls' basketball jersey moldering outside the gym—is its owner piecing her life back together in Houston or Baton Rouge? On the blackboard of an English classroom, still: AUGUST 29, 2005, DO NOW: SIGN IN. WRITE A PARAGRAPH WITH THE FOLLOWING WORDS: SAINTS, PRESEASON, FOOTBALL, RUNNING BACK.

Do now: Sign in, indeed. You in? The federal government has been "in," all right—indifferent and intransigent, almost criminally so. Much of the aid due the city is only just beginning to flow, while the engineering work and coastal management necessary to make New Orleans secure remain years and billions from completion. In the meantime local government has been "in" too—incompetent and incorrigible by turns; the status of Lawless High is only one of many examples. Even the country at large seems to suffer from Katrina fatigue, moving smartly on while clinging

STORM TOSSED Cracked helmets still lie outside the boys' locker room at Lawless, whose football players have scattered to other schools.





AFTER KATRINA

to caricatured notions of what life in the city is like—"Everything," says UNO athletic director Jim Miller, "from 'Gosh, shouldn't you be back to normal?' to 'You're still underwater, aren't you?'"

All of which leaves the fate of New Orleans to New Orleanians. And so they transform themselves from huddled masses to huddle-uppers, rebuilding and repopulating their city one home, one block, one neighborhood at a time.

THE "SUPER" in Superdome is no accidental prefix. In good times the 32-year-old stadium, one of the largest domed structures in the world, has hosted six Super Bowls, four Final Fours, Muhammad Ali and the Pope. In bad, it has served as the city's refuge of last resort, shelter from the storm for the indigent and infirm. As Katrina bore down on the Dome, and nursing homes dropped off patients with notes pinned to their clothing, the spectrum of humanity housed there ranged from gangbangers to tourists to those who would parade around the concourses singing *This Little Light of Mine*.

Soon after Katrina made landfall early on the morning of Monday, Aug. 29, winds of 127-mph blew two smoke-relief vents off the Superdome roof. Metal decking began to flap against steel trusses above the heads of terrified evacuees huddled in the lower bowl of seats. Soon a 60-foot gash had opened, and debris began to shower the field below: steel bolts, light fixtures, ceiling tiles, even a lightning rod, each an implement of death if it were to hit someone after a fall of 270 feet.

Doug Thornton watched all this with as much emotional freight as anyone. He is regional vice president of SMG, the Philadelphia-based venue-management company that operates the Superdome, and this is his building. Doug and his wife, Denise, had holed up there to ride out hurricanes before, though never with so many others. He and Lt. Col. Doug Mouton of the National Guard used a bullhorn and all their persuasive wiles to move evacuees out of danger without touching off panic.

As water cascaded down interior walls and stairwells, and wind further peeled back the roof, no one in the Dome knew that, all over the city, levees had begun to fail. Only on Tuesday morning did officials inside the Dome finally start piecing together the truth. Watching the water rise on Poydras Street, right outside the stadium, Thornton felt his heart seize up. When the power to downtown had failed on Monday, the Dome's emergency generator had kicked on, providing enough electricity for dim light. But if the generator were compromised by floodwaters, the arena would be plunged into darkness, causing panic, anarchy and death far greater than the six fatalities that would officially be recorded. Thornton raced to the boiler room to find water lapping against the door. Only a quick sandbagging operation saved the generator.

As the city filled with water, the Dome filled with more and more people, many delivered by helicopters straight from rooftops. The generator couldn't supply air conditioning or water pressure, only a post-apocalyptic half-light. Heat, squalor and unchecked rumors tugged at the fraying social fabric. Vandals and looters had their way with corporate suites and vending machines. A man was beaten nearly to death on word that he had tried to molest a girl. The corpses of four people who expired from the heat wound up in a catering freezer, while a man hurled himself off the upper deck. As several inches of sewer water covered the field, and human waste backed up, people—ultimately more than 30,000—would eat an MRE (Meal Ready to Eat), then defecate in the bag it had come in.

SHATTERED The only high school in the Lower Ninth, Lawless—whose gym floor remains submerged in debris—is not yet scheduled to reopen.



PURPOSE DRIVEN Doug Thornton, supervisor of the Superdome, and his wife, Denise, found a new calling in helping New Orleans rebuild.

After 3½ days in the Superdome, Denise Thornton was evacuated with other SMG families and nonessential employees in the wee hours of Sept. 1. By that afternoon her husband, as the last Dome staffer to be choppered out, caught a glimpse of their neighborhood in the affluent New Orleans subdivision of Lake-wood South. Water stood even with the eaves of houses. “There’s glistening water as far as the eye can see,” he says today. “This is epic. I’m thinking, It’s over. Where do we start? Can we ever rebuild? I’m crying all the way to Baton Rouge.”

The day after evacuating, Thornton began to search for the answer to a single question: Was the Superdome still structurally sound? If it was, there’d be a chance to rebuild. Never mind what would have to be replaced: 15% of the seats, 750,000 square feet of drywall, 850,000 square feet of ceiling tiles, virtually all the carpeting, the entire playing field and the 9.6-acre roof. At the end of the month engineers delivered word that only the roof had suffered structural damage. The Dome could indeed be rebuilt.

On Sept. 16 the Thorntons returned to the neighborhood where they had once lived. They came upon a brown, silent moonscape. After the storm surge raced through the breach in the levee along the 17th Street Canal less than a mile from the Thorntons’ home, the brackish water had sat for two weeks and killed all vegetation and animal life. With an ax Doug knocked down their front door. What they saw resembled what tens of thousands of others would see upon returning home: several inches of mud caked to the floor; mottles of mold from the flood-water marinade; a refrigerator that needed lugging to the curb.

But here too were reminders of what had made life pre-Katrina distinctively theirs, such as a photo album miraculously preserved because it sat on a sofa that the floodwaters buoyed to the ceiling. The Thorntons were lucky: Theirs was a two-story brick house, and the seven feet of standing water hadn’t quite reached the second floor.

Still they navigated the same posttraumatic stages that so many of their fellow citizens did. “Shock, then denial, then anger, then grief,” Doug says. He and Denise briefly became “wandering souls,” in his phrase, trying to figure out what to do. They considered crawfishing off to California, home of Denise’s son. Then, looking around, they thought, *We can’t leave. If we leave, and others like us leave, the city’s gone.* On Oct. 8 they moved into the home of friends in Metairie, just west of the city, and threw themselves into their respective reclamations—Doug of the Dome, Denise of their home.

For Doug, this was the professional challenge of a lifetime. The NFL—and Saints owner Tom Benson himself—made clear that the Dome had to be football-ready by late September 2006. Thornton kept contractors on a punishingly tight schedule. “If we can rebuild a two-million-square-foot building,” Thornton told anyone who would listen, “you can rebuild your neighborhood.” Of course, unlike many beleaguered private citizens, the Dome received aid from FEMA, the NFL and insurance companies.

Denise’s emotional journey covered a longer distance than Doug’s. “He was busy,” she says. “I was alone. I did a lot of soul-searching and realized I hadn’t done much meaningful

with my life.” Denise had hardly ever lifted a civic finger. Nonetheless, in mid-February 2006 she accepted a \$50,000 grant from former Hornets co-owner Ray Wooldridge and, with a core of volunteers, set up Beacon of Hope, a resource center for Lakewood neighbors still mostly scattered from the evacuation. A website, lakewoodbeacon.org, allowed former residents of Lakewood and neighboring Lakeview to post messages and scroll through listings of adjusters and contractors. Soon Thornton’s group, at first based in her garage, began lending out chain saws and weed whackers and making available the only working phone, fax and Internet lines in the neighborhood. The volunteers fashioned new street signs. They helped people obtain building permits online. They even arranged with the Red Cross to feed anyone who came home to discover no grocery stores for miles. By April the Thorntons had moved back into their house. And before long Denise had deputized other New Orleanians to establish Beacons in their own districts. From its beginnings in the Thorntons’ garage, Beacon of Hope has expanded to 11 neighborhoods—including, recently, poorer ones in Gentilly and the Lower Ninth Ward.

As the Thorntons learned in parallel about mold remediation and the foibles of contractors, they saw each other only at the ends of exhausting days. When they did have time and energy to talk, they tended to argue. She: *It’s obscene to spend almost \$200 million in mostly public funds on a stadium in a city where tens of thousands of people have lost their homes!* He: *This is the symbol of the recovery! There’ll be nobody to repopulate your city unless the world sees New Orleans on its feet again!* She: *Do you know how many houses we could build with even \$1 million? You’re building a stadium for football when there’s nobody here to go to a game!* He: *Before the storm every big sports event had a \$100 million to \$400 million impact!*

Eventually Denise came around to Doug’s point of view: that tourists pre-Katrina spent \$5 billion annually, and the receipts on taxes alone provided more than a third of the city’s operating budget. New Orleans without the Dome and its big events would be just a louche tourist village—Key West with a French accent. “The Superdome’s rebirth was proof that the city was going to make it,” Denise says. “Who’d invest so much money in a city that wasn’t?”

The rebuilding of the Dome was finished in nine months, right on schedule, and the roof was ready 36 days early—thanks to mostly local contractors whose pride in their city and NFL team were on the line, and thanks to the grace of nature, which supplied a run of favorable weather. On the first anniversary of the storm, CNN came to speak to the Thorntons. Approaching the Dome for an interview with Soledad O’Brien, Denise stopped cold at the loading dock, which had served as a staging area for special-needs cases. Nine

months earlier, in Atlanta’s Georgia Dome during the relocated Sugar Bowl game, Denise had suffered a panic attack from the crowd noise after a touchdown. Now Doug had to coax her over the threshold. She broke down upon going in. But she went in.

Her husband had his own moment of closure last Sept. 25, when the Saints hosted the Atlanta Falcons in the first game back. Just before 7 p.m. he found himself on the 10-yard line, looking up at the roofline in the southwest corner. Chance had taken him to the precise spot from which he had watched the roof tear and the debris fall. As the lights dimmed for the pregame entertainment, Thornton felt a spinal chill. The artificial gloaming matched the generator-illuminated moment of horror from a little more than a year earlier. Only now he couldn’t hear the din of metal decking flapping in the wind, just U2 and Green Day and Irma Thomas belting out the national anthem. Thornton scanned the same swath of seats once threatened by cascading debris. The people now radiated joy. “I realized then that the Superdome was just a building,” says Thornton, who cried until the lights came up. “Steel, glass and seats. And that these faces, these were happy faces.”

“After the flooding,” Thornton says, “I thought, This is epic. It’s over. Can we ever rebuild? I’m crying all the way to Baton Rouge.”

HAPPY FACES, to be sure, but not the same faces. As unifying as the Saints are—around town you’re likely to see black fans in Drew Brees jerseys and white fans in Reggie Bushes—Katrina highlighted the divide that cleaves New Orleans. Both the poorest residents and the members of the Katrina diaspora are primarily black. As the Saints thrive in a smaller, whiter, richer city, many African-American evacuees who want to return and rebuild can’t. Before the storm the Lower Ninth Ward, poor as it was, had a high rate of home ownership, as families passed down houses through generations. Now most of those homes are gone, memorialized by

weed-obscured slabs. FEMA won’t provide a trailer until a site has power and potable water, and city services are only beginning to make their way across the Industrial Canal to the Lower Ninth and New Orleans East. If white professionals like the Thorntons give up on it, there may indeed be no city—but without its ethnic flavor, New Orleans would be unrecognizable.

When city planners speak of “a smaller footprint” to be served by a drastically reduced tax base, they envision cutting loose much of the city east of the Industrial Canal—and in that many black New Orleanians hear “ethnic cleansing” or see a Trojan horse for an opportunistic landgrab. Before Katrina, there were 117 schools in the city; this year there will be 82, 42 of them charter schools. The New Orleans Recreation Department, whose services are essential to the one third of the population living in poverty, lost most of its facilities and 90% of its staff after the storm and is only now ramping back up thanks to donations, funding from nonprofits and settlements from FEMA and insur-



FIELD MARSHALS Gearing (left) and Tillman, at Carver High, are fighting to give at-risk kids a place to shine.

ance carriers. Since Katrina the New Orleans murder rate has more than doubled to become the nation's highest per capita, and virtually every homicide involves a young black man killing another as they jockey for turf in a redrawn city.

Watching this, Ron Gearing and Walter Tillman want to weep. Gearing, athletic director of the Orleans Parish public schools, and Tillman, who holds the same position for the state-administered Recovery School District, are graduates of Dillard, the historically black college in the Gentilly section. Today men make up only 22% of the students at their alma mater, a percentage that they believe would soar with the building of a football stadium on campus for both Dillard and New Orleans high schools to use. Get high school kids into football, goes the thinking, and they'll set their eyes on the prize of a diploma and a chance to play in college. Get Dillard to bring back football with the 26 scholarships allowed by the NAIA, and more boys would stay home for another four years. (Tulane, the lone NCAA Division I-A football school in town, has loftier entrance requirements and attracts mostly out-of-staters.) Get those boys to graduate from Dillard, and they'll follow the path of Gearing and Tillman as yeomen of the city.

"Every time I look in the paper and see a young face, the next word is 'gunshot,'" Gearing says. "It's a proven fact that those who participate in extracurricular activities graduate at a higher rate. Take a trumpet and give it to a kid, and that kid will graduate because he played in the band. Or we can [give him] a jersey, and he'll graduate because he was on a team. A cheerleader, a majorette, a dancer—those are the kids who make

it. The kids who don't embrace those things are the ones we lose."

For a basic 15,000-seat stadium, Gearing and Tillman figure they'd need \$15 million. But for the moment Dillard has no funds or plans to reintroduce the sport it dropped in the '60s. Hard by the London Avenue Canal, the campus suffered more than \$400 million in damage from flooding, looting and burning. Still, Gearing and Tillman have piqued the interest of several trustees, who are conducting a feasibility study and focus groups with students, faculty and Gentilly residents. An architect has inspected several parcels and begun to sketch out plans. And though Gearing and Tillman haven't yet started to raise funds, they talk up their vision to anyone they meet—including current and former NFL players, and corporate sponsors of a high school all-star football game they organize that pits athletes from New Orleans against players from other parts of Louisiana—and hear only encouraging words. Besides, they argue, the city sorely needs another high school football facility. Tad Gormley Stadium is the only one back on line, and to play there a team must win a lottery for field time and pay rent of \$1,800 per game, plus a \$1 surcharge for every seat filled. "We're averaging six or seven murders a day, so failure is not an option," says Gearing. "We're going to get this done."

But there's a debate worth having, much like the one Doug and Denise Thornton engaged in, about the place of sports in neighborhoods that are just beginning to be rebuilt. "You can't cross a bridge before you get to it," says Dan Williams, who grew up in the Lower Ninth and works with Common Ground, a relief organization that has been in the ward since the week Katrina hit.

"First of all, you have to have a house for a kid to live in. You have to have a store to provide for the kid. You have to have a school. And look around." He gestures at the western edge of the Lower Ninth. "There's not a home as far as the eye can see."

On the other hand, every time a school reopens, kids find their way to it. They may not be living with family, much less parents, but many seem hungry for community in their upended lives—which puts the onus even more squarely on the Ron Gearing and Walt Tillmans. Before the storm all but one of New Orleans's 19 public high schools fielded football teams; this fall, the two public high schools that have reopened and six recovery schools have full rosters, including McDonogh 35, a public high school in the Tremé neighborhood. Eight football teams take 320 young people off the streets and put them on fields. Factor in eight cheerleading squads, and that number is closer to 500. "As soon as McDonogh 35 opened, 900 students came," says Gearing. "Where they were, I don't know—but 900 came. We want to get them back to a normal way of life. Give them diversions. Give them athletics."

IF SPORTS have any say in the matter, visitors will flock back to New Orleans. Virtually every national-profile event that made the city a port of call pre-Katrina—from the Sugar Bowl and the Mardi Gras Marathon to the PGA's Zurich Classic and the NCAA basketball tournament—is back or plans to return. The NBA is bringing its All-Star Game in February, and last month's Arena Bowl reneged on a commitment to Las Vegas to show solidarity with New Orleans and its AFL team, the VooDoo.

In fact, ample hotel space—which was largely untouched by floodwaters—and the rebuilt Superdome ensured that the big events would come back. It's more surprising that the city's NFL team remains in town. Before the storm, Benson did little to allay fans' fears that he planned to move the Saints, and if ever an owner had an excuse to light out for a new market, Benson did after Katrina. Playing out of temporary quarters in San Antonio, his team went 3–13, and before the 2006 season soothsayers picked the Saints last, figuring it was only a matter of time before they moved to the Alamodome for good. In the weeks after the storm New Orleanians used those ruined refrigerators at the curb as whiteboards, spray-painting anything on their fevered minds; some graffiti said, SEND U MAGOTS [TO] TOM BENSON [IN] TEXAS and DO NOT OPEN TOM BENSON INSIDE.

Instead, by reaching last season's NFC title game, the Saints seemed to track a redemption narrative parallel to the city's, from Brees and running back Deuce McAllister, both rehabbing from surgery; to Bush, the running back with something to prove after being passed over as the No. 1 pick; to receiver Marques Colston, a seventh-round draft choice who nearly became NFL

Get high school kids into football, goes the thinking, and they'll set their eyes on the prize of a diploma and a chance to play in college.

AFTER KATRINA

Offensive Rookie of the Year. In a town always ready to believe in the supernatural, fans point out that the Dome stands near the site of an old cemetery, and that it took a voodoo priestess like Katrina to wash the evil spirits away.

That the Saints are now so prosperous beyond the field seems to beg for an even more fantastical explanation. Despite New Orleans's size (the smallest market with two major pro teams), median household income (\$27,355 a year before Katrina) and dearth of FORTUNE 500 businesses (the city has one, Entergy), the team has sold out all 137 suites and 68,000 season seats for this fall while sitting on a waiting list of more than 30,000. But then the region today is pulsing with contractors, mostly male, ready to step out and spend when not working overtime. "Dis-

cretionary stuff usually suffers during tough times, but there are fewer ways to spend your money," Thornton says. "This community will be rebuilding for a long time, and we're just now seeing some of the federal money trickle down. The big question is when and how that will translate into a broader corporate base."

It's a question most critical to the NBA Hornets, who in October begin their first full season back in the New Orleans Arena after spending the last two seasons in Oklahoma City. Unlike the Saints, the Hornets play a game that holds no special place in the cultural heart of the Deep South. They don't enjoy revenue sharing within the NBA to the same extent the Saints do within the NFL, nor do they play all their games on weekends, when Saints fans routinely drive to the Dome from three neighboring states. Local sponsorship is more critical to NBA teams than to their NFL counterparts, and many of the city's top businesses left after the storm.

Like the Saints, the Hornets are trying to attract corporate support in part by folding community service projects into sponsorship packages. (This summer in

their Hoops Tour, sponsored by Touro Hospital, Hornets players held free clinics for children aged seven to 14 in Louisiana and Mississippi.) Meanwhile Brees's own Brees Dream Foundation has launched a \$2.5 million campaign to raise funds for eight projects to benefit New Orleans youth. "What's keeping people from coming back is wondering if this is a safe place to raise children," the Saints quarterback says. "Whether it be schools or athletic programs or infrastructure, our biggest emphasis right now is on providing those things."

So: You in? Anyone who is joins Brees, who with his wife, Brittany, bought a 100-year-old, wind-damaged fixer-upper in Uptown New Orleans, in the shadow of the levees.

They join UNO guard Bo McCaleb, the Sun Belt player of the year, who'll play out his eligibility at his hometown school, even though the Privateers' Lakefront Arena won't reopen in time for his senior season because of dickering between FEMA and the state over repairs to the roof.

AFTER KATRINA

They join Miller, the UNO athletic director, who calls the schools that try to induce McCaleb to transfer—and spread rumors that UNO will drop basketball—“vultures,” even as he beams over the Privateers’ third coach in two years, former Cal assistant Joe Pasternack, who chose to come home even though (or perhaps because) his childhood home had to be gutted.

They join former Saints executive Arnold Fielkow, whom New Orleanians elected to the city council by 56% of the vote in part because they believed that Benson had fired him for advocating too strenuously to keep the team in New Orleans.

They join Benson himself, who by current accounts isn’t going anywhere—and who danced on the sideline as his Saints beat the Philadelphia Eagles for a berth in that NFC title game.

And they join the *Times-Picayune*’s David Meeks, the sports editor who led the team of reporters and photographers that, after a mandatory staff evacuation, sneaked back into the city on a delivery truck and won a Pulitzer Prize for its reporting on the storm’s aftermath—all after Meeks swam through his kitchen to rescue his dog. “I’ve learned that human beings have a tremendous homing instinct,” says Meeks, now the paper’s city editor, who was among the first to return to Lakeview to gut and rebuild. “People go back to where they come from. I’ve also learned that what you decide to do will determine what others do. My 75-year-old neighbor pulled up one day and said to me, ‘I knew you’d be back.’ And now he’s back.”

Second liners are those who fall in behind a brass band come Mardi Gras. A parade in New Orleans never lacks for second liners, people ready to be caught up in follow-the-leader. In this clannish, convivial, stoop-sitting town, urban seat of a state with the nation’s second-highest percentage of native-born residents, “You in?” is no idle question.

NEW ORLEANS isn’t merely a city still in peril. It’s a place at even greater risk than before the storm. A Category 3 hurricane whose eye struck well to the east, Katrina wasn’t the Big One, notwithstanding the epic damage and suffering it caused because of breaches of the levees (“that frail breastwork of earth,” as Mark Twain put it, “between the people and destruction”). Nonetheless, by wiping out more than 100 square miles of Louisiana coastal wetlands and the protection they afford, Katrina ensured that the next middling-strength hurricane to deal New Orleans even a glancing blow will bring a storm surge roughly three feet higher—and the defenses that failed so miserably two years ago haven’t been restored even to pre-Katrina strength. (This assessment doesn’t account for global climate change. Forget New Orleans; at their current pace, rising sea levels will

make Baton Rouge a coastal city by the end of this century.)

These facts shouldn’t be taken as an argument not to rebuild. On the contrary: There’s a preservationist case to be made, in which sports in New Orleans muscle their way alongside cuisine and music—all worth saving because they make life worth living, especially when people the world over want to sample that very culture.

Besides, sports tell us that the longer the odds, the greater the incumbency on us to defy them. Otherwise, why get in the game at all? More than a dozen years ago the president of Eritrea, which was suffering a horrible famine, gratefully accepted donations of sports equipment because even in the midst of misery those soccer balls served as the world’s acknowledgment that his people

were, as he put it, “more than just mouths to feed.” Sports play their own life-affirming role for spectators too: In Sarajevo during the siege of 1992–96, thousands of residents gathered in gyms to watch basketball games even knowing that artillery in the hills girdling the city could take them out with one well-placed shell. It meant that much to them to see that their neighbors were still alive. Especially under extraordinary circumstances, sports offer something more than the IV drip of subsistence.

Pick up a copy of the world’s great francophone sports

newspaper *L’Equipe*, and it seems that every other headline signals the exploit of some athlete or team with the verb *s’imposer*—to impose oneself. *S’imposer* is a far cry from *laisser* (to allow), the word in New Orleans’s original tongue that best captures the place, with its *bon temps* and forgotten cares. But that’s what sports bid us do: impose ourselves or go down trying. To emboss the bad times with a good-times seal. To never subordinate will to fate. “The potential is here,” says George Shinn, the Hornets’ owner, who has returned with his wife to their downtown condo. “It’s up to us to bust our butts. I could be wrong, but I just have a gut feeling that this thing’s going to work. And quite frankly, I’m tired of moving.”

In Central City, where New Orleans’s murder rate is highest, there’s a story of a sixth-grader who’s also back. He returned from out of state to find the baseball diamond he grew up on littered with flotsam. He set about clearing that field of everything, except for a car that had fetched up on the third base line. For that he enlisted neighbors to help him move it to the street, whereupon he and his friends could see a clear path from third to the plate. If nothing else, that sixth-grader’s story is a parable that reminds us that after any disaster there’s work to be done—work well worth doing, and doing with others—before you can get back home.

Now where did we leave off? A paragraph, please, with the following words: *Saints, preseason, football, running back.* □



HIGH AND DRY A play posted two years ago in the Lawless locker room, above the 5½-foot watermark the flood would leave, is a reminder of seasons lost.

"My friends call me 'Skinny'!"

"Thanks to a no-brainer weight loss program from NutriSystem."

After retiring from a career in professional football, Miami quarterback Dan Marino started to pack on a few extra pounds. Now a TV football analyst, Dan wanted to look his best in front of the cameras. Yet every year it seemed harder and harder to lose the weight for TV. So before starting this season he turned to the NutriSystem For Men program to lose the pounds he gained since leaving the game.

Over the years I've gotten used to being watched by millions of people. But being a TV analyst was a whole lot different than being on the field. In my new job I couldn't hide behind a helmet and pads. To succeed in this new career I wanted to look my best. So when I thought I needed to lose a few pounds, I turned to NutriSystem For Men.

Boy, am I glad I did. I lost 22 pounds* on the program and, man, do I feel great.

"I got down to my playing weight... and it wasn't that hard."

It was one of the best decisions I ever made. I haven't been at this weight since I started playing pro football back in 1983.

Now, I was able to stay in pretty good condition during my career. But after I retired I started to pack on a few pounds. And if you are like me, then you know that the older you get the harder it is to lose weight. I mean, I still worked out. But I never really saw the progress that I saw when I was younger.

Hey. Just because I'm 44 years old doesn't mean that I lost the desire to live life to the fullest. I wanted to look better and feel better than I had since retiring. And NutriSystem helped me reach that goal. If you know me, you know I hate to lose. But this time losing never felt so good.

"The secret was the NutriSystem Glycemic Advantage™."

Now, this was important because part of my problem was that I love to eat carbs...and eat a lot of them. So even when I worked out like a fiend, I didn't see the results I wanted to see.



"I got to eat my favorite meal — lasagna!"
— Dan Marino

But going on NutriSystem changed all that. Now, I admit it—when I heard the word diet, my first instinct was to run. I didn't want to deprive myself. I didn't want to eat rabbit food and be cranky all day. I have a life to live. I never wanted to give up the things that I love to eat.

Well, with the NutriSystem For Men program, I never had to give up anything.

"Real food. For real men."

You get a variety of foods to eat with NutriSystem. Burgers. Hot dogs. Lasagna. Pancakes. Pot roast. Meatballs. You know, foods that guys love to eat.**

I'm talking big taste. Bold flavors. Hearty meals. Believe me, this food is awesome! Thanks to NutriSystem, I ate like a man and still lost weight.

I guess that people sometimes think that when you are on a diet, you really don't eat. But you really do eat a significant amount of food on this program**. I got to eat these kinds of foods five times a day. How good is that?

"Listen, guys. NutriSystem took the work out of weight loss."

The meals were super easy to prepare. All I had to do was heat them in the microwave for 2 minutes and I was done. How simple is that?

And I don't know about you, but there was no way I was going to spend my time counting calories or points or anything like that. And horses couldn't drag me to a center for a weekly weigh-in. I may be retired, but I still have a lot of pride.

That's what made NutriSystem perfect for a guy like me. It was an easy, convenient and delicious way for me to feel satisfied.

One of the other things that I really liked about the program is that it fit my lifestyle. I was able to eat with my family, go on trips and even attend a few parties — and I still lost weight. That's right. For the first time, I was able to go on a diet and have fun. Because NutriSystem fit into my lifestyle, not the other way around.

"Wow. The weight kept coming off."

My goal was getting to 20 pounds lost and I got to 22*. My wife loves the way I look and all my family are amazed at how much younger I appear. I even have a new nickname. My friends are calling me "Skinny." I don't think anyone ever called me that.

I think that if I were going to give any advice to other men wanting to go on NutriSystem, it's that it just comes down to making a decision. Making a decision that you're going to lose weight and to get started, eat the right foods and get with the program. You know, just make that decision and just go for it.

"Losing never felt this good."

Look. The fact is you can go to the gym and do all the crunches you want. But if you don't eat right, you won't lose that gut hanging over your belt.

Hey. If you aren't happy with the way you look or if you are feeling too tired because of all that extra weight you're lugging around, then do what I did. Make the decision to make a change. Get off of that seat. Make the phone call. And change your life.

C'mon. What do you have to lose...except that weight that you hate? If NutriSystem For Men worked for me, trust me, it will work for you.

All you gotta do is believe that you can do it. Get to work. Make your decision to lose weight. And then lose it. With NutriSystem, it's that simple.

Dan Marino Lost 22 lbs.*



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The Week In Sports Inside

Olympic Sports

Introducing the newest queen of U.S. gymnastics, Shawn Johnson • The Hamm twins begin their bid for a trip to Beijing

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NASCAR

The Hendrick and Gibbs teams cement their superpower status • Toyota might get bigger names, but will it have the horsepower?



X MARKS THE SPOT Reigning Olympic all-around gymnastics champion Paul Hamm won the floor exercise at the U.S. nationals last Friday, his first competition since winning gold in Athens three years ago. Hamm also finished fourth in the pommel horse during the four-day event in San Jose (page 94).

Photograph by Peter Read Miller

Inside Olympic Sports

by Brian Cazeneuve



Small Wonder

The latest pint-sized U.S. gymnastics queen, 4' 8" Shawn Johnson, served notice with a dominating nationals

FOR AT LEAST a moment last Saturday night, Shawn Johnson wasn't concerned about the context of her achievements. Sure, the 15-year-old from West Des Moines had picked an ideal time, a pre-Olympic year, to be crowned the new queen of U.S. gymnastics. And, yes, her

3.45-point margin of victory in the all-around competition at the U.S. nationals in San Jose was enormous, since just 2.20 points separated the second- and fifth-place finishers. But even though just two weeks remained before the world championships in Stuttgart, Germany, Johnson wasn't thinking in gymnastics terms. Asked where the overwhelming performance put her among the sport's stars, she replied, "Cloud nine. I'll think about tomorrow when I come down."

Johnson has been a master of such complex landings since the day in 1992 when, as a nine-month-old, she startled her mother, Teri, by appearing in the doorway of the family's

bathroom, where Teri was fixing her hair. "I was horrified," says Teri, who was sure she had left Shawn in her crib. "How did she climb out? How did she get down?" The dismount from crib top to floor was a good four feet, roughly the height of a regulation balance beam. Says Shawn, "I think I was born a monkey."

When Shawn was six, Teri, an account clerk, and her husband, Doug, a self-employed carpenter, enrolled Shawn in a gymnastics club. They had no idea that the owner and coach, Liang Chow, had been a member of the Chinese national team for three years and could spot a prodigy. "In a week she learned a back handspring," he says. "I knew this one was special."

HIGH FLIER Johnson showed no weaknesses as she easily won the all-around.

In 2004 Chow sent a tape of Johnson's performances to Martha Karolyi, the U.S. women's national team coordinator, whom he had never met. Chow attached a note saying of his 12-year-old protégée, "This kid can help the U.S. team."

"Either he was brave or crazy," Karolyi says, "but his gymnast had some spark."

Last summer in St. Paul, Johnson won the U.S. junior all-

around title with a final score of 124.10 points, .40 points higher than the score of the senior champ, Nastia Liukin. Johnson also was the only U.S. female gymnast last year at any level to do a double-twisting double-back somersault on the floor exercise. Furthermore, her bars dismount is a rarely seen layout double double.

Though she still lacks a signature move, the 4' 8", 90-pound Johnson has no especially weak event—she scored above 15 points on all eight of her routines last week and led the all-around from the second rotation on. She also seems oblivious to pressure. Last month she won five medals (four gold) at the Pan American Games in Rio de Janeiro, where spectators not only jeered U.S. gymnasts mercilessly but also timed their boos and hoots for release moves on bars and for backflips on beam. "Try to scare her," Karolyi says. "You can try all day. She's too smart."

On the upper left of her leotard Johnson has her first name sequined in Chinese, a reminder that her ultimate goal is next summer's Olympics in Beijing. But this gymnast is dreaming of a routine that *won't* win her a medal. "I really want to see the Great Wall," she says. "I can do flips on it." □

A Pair of Familiar Faces

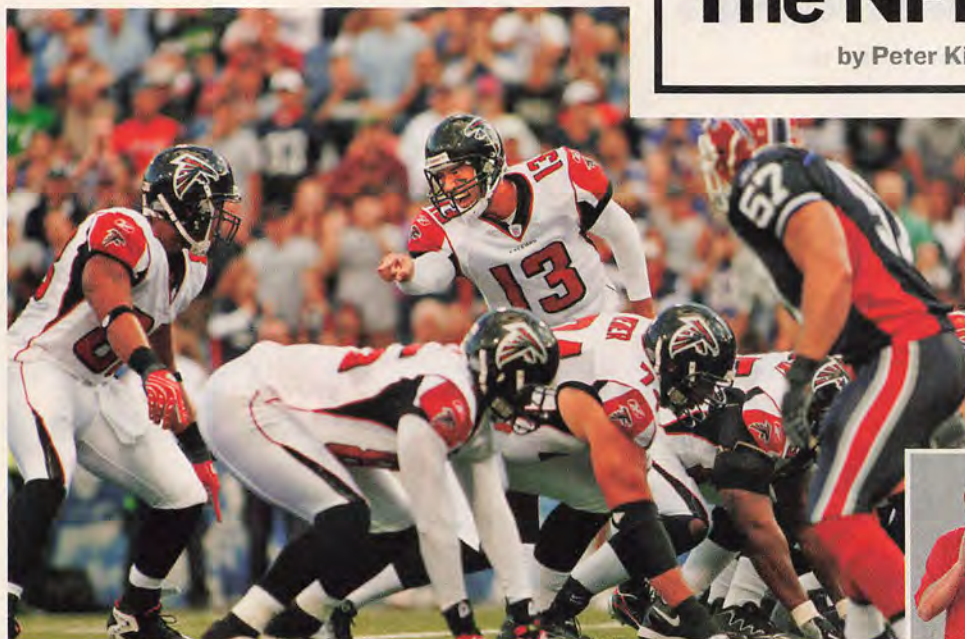
At the U.S. nationals twins **Paul and Morgan Hamm**, 24, returned to competition for the first time since the 2004 Olympics,

at which Paul won the all-around gold amid controversy that helped drive him from the sport. (An arbitration panel ruled that South Korean bronze medalist Yang Tae Young had been unfairly docked a decisive .10 points.) Both Hammes entered just two events in San Jose, with Paul (*above*) winning gold on floor. "It feels good to have a second wind in your career," says Paul, who earned an accounting degree at Ohio State during his hiatus. (Morgan's is in exercise science.) "Athens was both a good note and a bad note. It would be good to go out on a good note." Though Paul wasn't named to the worlds team, both Hammes remain in contention for a berth in Beijing. —B.C.



The NFL Inside

by Peter King



Now or Never?

Saying he's finally in the right situation, Joey Harrington gets his shot in Atlanta for what will be a make-or-break year

SO THIS is how it's going to be for the Falcons on the road this year. ¶ *"Hey, Joey! Who let the dogs out? Woof-woof-woof-woof!"* That's the way quarterback Joey Harrington and his Atlanta teammates were greeted when they walked down the tunnel at Ralph Wilson Stadium in Orchard Park, N.Y., last Friday night. The dogfighting charges against Michael Vick undoubtedly will follow his team wherever it goes this season, even if he doesn't make it into uniform.

"Never heard it," Harrington said of the shouting, after the Falcons' 13-10 win. Then he added, with a smile, "Hey, if I survived death threats to my cellphone in Detroit, I think I can take a little barking."

Based on how his first five years in the NFL went, you'd think his name was The Embattled Joey Harrington. In four years with the Lions and then last season with the Dolphins, Harrington, the third pick in the 2002 draft, went 23-43 as a

starter, never threw 20 TD passes in a season and never had a year in which he completed more than 57.5% of his attempts—in a league in which the average over the past five seasons was 59.5%. Among active quarterbacks with at least three years of starting experience, his 68.1 passer rating is the lowest.

Entering the season, the Falcons would be suspect with Vick under center, and without him they look to be one of the worst teams in the league. In his first two preseason trials using new coach Bobby Petrino's offense, which relies heavily on the quarterback's decision-making at the line, Harrington directed one scoring drive in seven possessions. Against the Bills the

POINT MAN Petrino (inset) is confident Harrington (13) will make the right adjustments.

wide receivers, perennially plagued with bad hands, were true to form in dropping two catchable Harrington passes on a first-quarter drive. Just as bad—in one of those moments that used to leave Lions fans thinking, *Why did he make that throw?*—Harrington tossed a wounded duck into a stiff breeze that was intercepted by Buffalo cornerback Terrence McGee.

Nevertheless, Harrington walks and talks like a man who

just won the lottery. He says this is the first time in his career that a coach has trusted him to make multiple adjustments at the line. And why not? It was his football intelligence, after all, that contributed to Harrington's becoming a hot prospect at Oregon, where he was 25-3.

"This is the break I was looking for, because this offense was made for me," said Harrington, who was released by the Dolphins in March. "In Detroit what we called was what we ran. Here you see pressure coming that you didn't expect, you make a protection

adjustment at the line, and it allows you the time to make plays. [The quarterback] always has the trump card."

But after five seasons of mediocre results at best, one has to wonder if Harrington is cut out to be an NFL quarterback. He doesn't seem capable of lifting a needy team to respectability.

"Hell, yeah, I can do this, and I can succeed," he said. "The thing I've learned is, if I dwell on any of the stuff outside my control—fans, media, the distractions [of the Vick situation]—I will miss my opportunity. I won't let that happen." □



Three Points

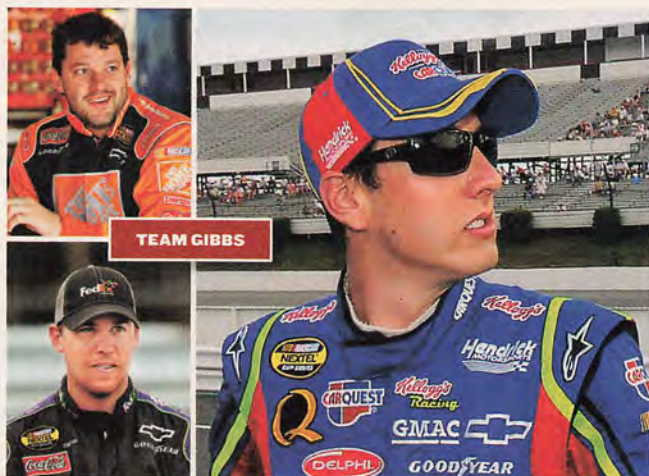
1 **Drew Brees** has picked up where he left off last season, when he led the Saints to the NFC Championship Game. In his last two preseason games combined, Brees has completed 18 of 20 passes against first-team defenses. "I'm getting excited," he said after strafing the Bengals last Saturday night.

2 NFL owners' charging fans regular-season prices for tickets to preseason games is a travesty. **LaDainian Tomlinson** has sat for eight straight exhibitions—the Chargers say he gets enough work in practices to be ready for the season—but San Diego fans still have to pay from \$54 to \$290.

3 I will be surprised if **Byron Leftwich**, now the lightest he has been as a pro (242 pounds), doesn't have the kind of franchise-quarterback season the Jaguars envisioned when they drafted him seventh overall in 2003.

Inside NASCAR

by Lars Anderson



TEAM GIBBS

TEAM HENDRICK

All-Star Teams

As Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Kyle Busch get set to change garages, NASCAR is entering a new era of superpowers

It's an old story in pro sports: Rich teams flourish with free agency, poor teams flounder (at least until a salary cap is introduced). NASCAR is no different, as the two deep-pocketed juggernauts of the sport, Hendrick Motorsports and Joe Gibbs Racing, have emerged as the big winners in the 2008 free-agency sweepstakes.

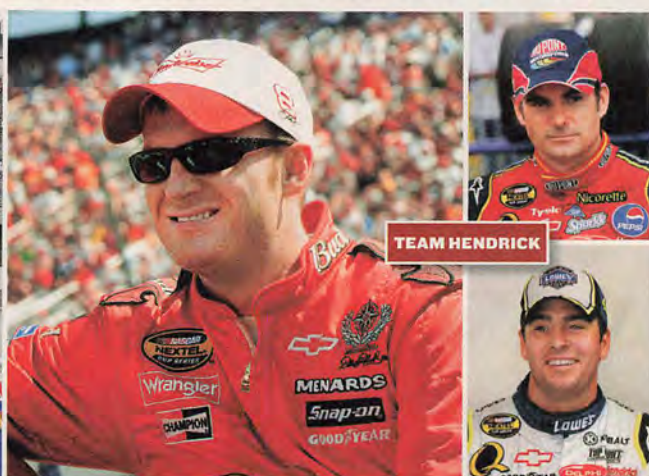
Last week the final elite domino fell when Kyle Busch signed a three-year contract with Gibbs, for whom he'll replace the underperforming J.J. Yeley in the number 18 car next season. The 22-year-old Busch, who has spent his first three full seasons of Cup racing at Hendrick, will team with Tony Stewart and Denny Hamlin to give Gibbs three drivers capable of winning the championship in '08. Hendrick, meanwhile, has signed Dale Earnhardt Jr. to team with Jeff Gordon and Jimmie Johnson, giving the team the most star-studded lineup in Cup history.

Forecasting how all these moves will affect the title

race both this year and next is tricky, though. According to several NASCAR sources, Gibbs Racing is on the verge of switching its manufacturing support from Chevrolet to Toyota. If JGR does make the switch, its drivers and crew chiefs will have to solve the handling and horsepower problems that have afflicted the fleet of Toyota Camrys in '07—problems that will likely translate into a slow start for Busch & Co. next season.

Toyota has struggled mightily in its first season of Cup racing. None of the seven drivers racing Camrys are in the top 30 in points, and the automaker's flagship team, Michael Waltrip Racing, has been among the biggest disappointments, picking up a

DEEP SIX Between them, Gibbs's '08 trio of (clockwise from bottom left) Hamlin, Stewart and Busch, and Hendrick's slate of Earnhardt, Gordon and Johnson have won 13 times in '07.



single top 10 finish in the first 22 races. It has become clear to Toyota officials that the only way they're going to be consistently competitive in the Cup series is to be affiliated with an established, topflight team, such as Gibbs.

But if anyone thinks Busch's lame-duck status will hurt Hendrick in the '07 Cup race, guess again. Busch desperately wants to do well to prove that Rick Hendrick, who has been almost a father figure to him, made a mistake in letting him go. Also, Busch's crew chief, Alan Gustafson, is auditioning for a crew chief job next season at Hendrick, which means that for the final 14 races of the season he'll be as driven as anyone in the garage to find speed. "We have our different reasons, but Kyle and I are as motivated to win races as we've ever been," says Gus-

tafson. "The stakes are high for both of us."

Earnhardt—currently 14th in points and a long shot to make the Chase—is also a lame duck, but his decision to leave Dale Earnhardt Inc. has been a boon to teammate Martin Truex Jr., who was 11th in the standings at week's end and is poised to be a serious player in the NASCAR playoffs. Since he's now DEI's No. 1 driver, he's getting the kind of preferential treatment once given to Earnhardt as the entire organization pours every available resource into his cars.

But Little E will no doubt be back in the lead pack in '08. After all, the powerhouses of Hendrick and Gibbs have combined to win 14 of the first 22 races this season, and it doesn't look like any other team in the garage will be catching either of them anytime soon. □

One Hot Rivalry

Hendrick Motorsports and Joe Gibbs Racing are currently the two most dominant teams in NASCAR. Here's how the two teams' projected 2008 lineups stack up against each other since the start of the '05 season.

TEAM	WINS	TOP 5s	CHAMPIONSHIPS
HENDRICK	26	103	1 (Johnson, '06)
GIBBS	20	80	1 (Stewart, '05)



Every lap matters.

It's that time of year. The Chase field is almost locked. The action's even crazier, the racing's even tighter, and the drivers are even more intense. And perhaps no place dials up that intensity more than Bristol. It's 500 straight laps of banging and rubbing. Who will be the last man standing? Who will survive the treacherous banking and withstand the extreme exhaustion? On a short track like "The Bullring," it's anybody's guess.



at Bristol

Presented by Pennzoil

Sat., 7:00pm ET ESPN HD



at Bristol

Fri., 7:30pm ET ESPN2 HD



On Tiger's Track

by Rick Reilly

HEY, THANKS for checking out the official website of Tiger Woods Design!

As you know, Tiger has just announced plans to design his first golf course in the U.S.—The Cliffs at High Carolina, near Asheville, N.C.

Click **VIRTUAL TOUR** and you can be one of the first to see what playing at a Tiger Woods course will be like!

Your arrival Nobody less than Tiger's caddie, Steve Williams, will be waiting to "park" your car. (Note: Buicks only, please.) And don't be alarmed by Stevie's flame-retardant race suit!

Check in It's all handled in our luxurious pro shop, where there's a sale on every day for red shirts and size 32 belts. (Note: We no longer accept American Express.) Everybody knows Tiger can be a little cheap, so count your change.

What to do with the kids? Take advantage of our *fantastic* Swedish nanny day care center.

Practice facility State of the art, naturally. The launch angle monitors are from NASA. And do you recognize the little guy driving the range cart? It's 2000 PGA Championship runner-up Bob May!

Caddies They're the best around. Each carries a GPS device that not only gives precise yardage but also a tip from Tiger! For instance, on this approach shot at the 12th hole, Tiger advises, "Hit a little chase 240-yard three-iron with a one-yard draw. Nip it so it bounces twice and checks. That ought to leave you with just a measly little 30-footer you can brush right in. Fist pump!" And if you screw up the shot, the device plays Phil Mickelson saying, "I'm *such* an idiot!"

And, yep, that's Fluff, having a smoke outside the caddie shack.

Quick lesson? Why not get one from our fine teaching pro? (Note: Pro changes every three years.)

Need a fourth? Tiger is always delighted to fill out any foursome! (Note: Customary \$3 million appearance fee will apply.)

Before you play Be sure to clean your cleats on the Rory Sabbatini floor mats. And feel free to use our Kodak Krusher on the 1st tee, as no cameras are allowed.

The layout The 9,079-yard, par-59 Cliffs course features pinched and narrow fairways on most holes, but after 290 yards they open way up. All hazards, OB and lakes are on the left side. Enjoy the Nautilus training sessions on every tee box! (Note:



Click here and be one of the first to see what playing at a Tiger Woods-designed golf course is going to be like. (The Swedish nanny day care center is *fantastic*.)

Please don't inquire as to Tiger's workout.)

Tees There are only two sets of tees here—the Tiger Tees, which are way back, and the Barkley Tees, which are 30 yards in front of the green.

Tiger rules No lefties allowed. No collared shirts. No Ryder Cup-style matches.

Handicaps Tiger hates giving anybody strokes, so the holes at the Cliffs are not handicapped, except number 8, where only plus-7s get one shot.

Front nine The 1st hole is a standard 142-yard par 2. The 7th, our signature hole, features a mandatory bungee jump to the green. The 9th requires you to hit the ball under a nine-foot-high canopy of trees yet carry a 220-yard lake. (What, you don't have a "stinger" that can do that?)

Swearing Failure to cuss after a bad shot will result in immediate ejection from the course.

At the turn Why not enjoy a bite at our amazing halfway house: Stephen Ames's 9 & 8. Be sure to try the Fried Ernie Eels!

Back nine You'll love the swoosh-shaped 13th. And the 15th has a drive-thru banking lane just in case Tiger has to deposit the estimated \$200,000 he makes *per day*! You finish on the challenging 621-yard, par-4 18th, where the water hazard is 181 feet long, just *barely* big enough to hold those 180-foot yachts. Dock 'em if you got 'em!

After you putt out Whether you play like Tiger or Tigger, one of our cuddly, elderly employees will be waiting to give you a warm, extended hug. Tissues provided.

19th hole Our clubhouse man, David Duval, is ready to serve you. And on the jukebox, choose from any song on the *Hootie and the Blowfish Greatest Hit* CD!

Trophy room This airplane hangar has been turned into a Tiger Trophy Room. This contains all the trophies he won from ages three to six.

Stay for dinner Chef Fuzzy Zoeller will be preparing his White Plate Special: fried chicken and collard greens! (Please note: The standard 2% Tiger Tip is included in all meals.)

Don't forget At all Tiger Woods courses, Cablinasians play free! □

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